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# THE JINX

*STORIES OF THE DIAMOND*

BY  
ALLEN SANGREE



ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
F. R. GRUGER, ARCHIE GUNN, C. J. TAYLOR  
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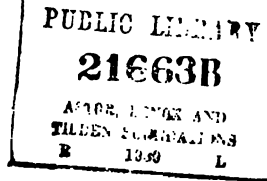
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*The Jinx*

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WAR 19 FEB '36



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## THE JINX

**M**ONTAGUE DASHER, generally known as The Dasher, because of his agility in running bases, was of a singularly ill humor. For some weeks the patrons of Mrs. O'Hara's boarding house had marked this temper and wondered. Could it be that the gentlemanly but efficient third baseman of the Pioneers was in love? If so, all the more remarkable, since their fellow-guest had never displayed any sentimental weakness. Indeed, he appeared indifferent to all feminine blandishment, though, goodness knows, the neighborhood's fairness had set itself before him singly and in phalanx.

Not in its memory had Grove's Court come into such proximity to a world-famous ball player, one whose picture adorned sporting pages and souvenir postals, and who was so popular in his own city that joy-mad spectators fought to carry him off the field of battle. So generous was this



mantle of adulation that corners of it fluttered from the shoulders of Mr. Montague Dasher and enwrapped those of the fortunate few who shared his lodgings.

When Mr. Potts, for example, cashier of an express office, a wizened, wry-lipped vegetarian, upon leaving his work at precisely six minutes after six fell in with The Dasher returning from the game, he stared from side to side, gloating, and expanded his puny chest.

Fleming, head of the "gents' furnishing" in Cook & Ramsey's, red-mustached, putty-cheeked and loquacious-lipped, seldom failed to quote the talismanic name every ten minutes.

"As I was tellin' The Dasher this morning," he would preface—"third baseman of the Pioneers, you know; lives with me—these barred ties'll be all the rage in a couple of weeks." Or: "Talkin' of baseball, The Dasher told me last night—we have an apartment together up in Grove's Court—that there'll only be two clubs in th' race. The Prunes haven't got a chance! Grand fellow, The Dasher, and a swell dresser."



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Young Hopper, the red-cheeked, wide-eyed country lad, feasted upon the hero's countenance, and down in the butter-and-egg store dreamed of immortal fame. He read avidly every line about The Dasher, cut out his pictures to send home, and once a week pinched himself of some necessity to buy a grandstand seat near the third-base line, whence he could narrowly see the prodigy in action.

The women, to be sure, were more cunning in their demonstration. Miss Dechamp, the manicurist, even announced—after various ingratiating shifts—that professional ball players were common.

“His hands are something awful,” she told Miss Carew, the schoolmistress who wrote love stories for the Human Interest Monthly. “And did you ever notice how he eats off the side of his fork? That’s the worst etiquette there is! I read it in a book.”

Miss Carew smiled with a supreme and amused benevolence. At the Bohemian Club, where she dined and drank red wine weekly, she described

the manicurist as "delicious." The Dasher was a "naïve animal." She intended using both of them in her "great American novel."

An animal, perhaps, The Dasher was, and a fine animal, too, with his muscular grace, cutting blue eyes, sun-tanned face, chestnut hair and tigerlike strength. How naïve the reader may judge for himself.

At the college where he had been employed to pitch, before joining a minor league, The Dasher had learned the meaning of  $H_2O$  and to keep quiet when he did not understand. Taciturn with his own teammates, he became almost mute among outsiders. And yet Montague Dasher was not devoid of speculation and conclusion. Fleming he put down as a "fresh guy"; Miss Dechamp was a "lightweight," and the schoolmistress-author he numbered as a "phony piece of ice"—that is to say, a fake diamond.

When the first mentioned, of a summer evening as they all sat on the stoop, would inquire hungrily: "Say, Dasher, what happened to the Pioneers today? Thought sure they'd beat th'

Banshees with Yegg Miller in the box," Montague would curtly reply: "Things broke wrong."

"Broke wrong!" Miss Carew would exclaim. "How terribly interesting! Do tell us, Mr. Dasher, just what you mean. I know that you men have some peculiar philosophy all of your own, and subtle, too; I'm sure of it. Broke wrong?"

"Their pitcher had th' Indian sign on us," was The Dasher's explanation, accompanied by a searching, suspicious glint, and then he would usually plead weariness, excusing himself to "hit th' hay."

It remained for Fleming to interpret these phrases of the diamond, which he did with great unction, unhampered by tedious truth.

On a certain night in early August, shortly after the Pioneers had returned for a three-weeks' play on the home grounds, Grove's Court and the O'Hara household were in a fine commotion over the departure of Mr. Montague Dasher and Miss Nona O'Hara, the landlady's daughter, whom the hero had invited to a roof-garden show. It was singular,

in itself, that Dasher should all of a sudden, without any intimation, evince dilection toward a young lady, but the logic of Grove's Court collapsed utterly in view of the fact that Nona's personality, though trim and alluring, was blighted with cross-eyes—eyes so startlingly, comically, confusedly crossed that they aroused no feeling of pity or tenderness—only humor.

Little wonder that the secret of her fascination for the handsome Dasher should elude even the penetration of Miss Carew. With a twinge of bitterness in her voice, and after a minute's breath-holding as hero and maid vanished, she comforted Miss Dechamp by observing:

"It's a case of class, my dear."

"That's right," supplemented the manicurist laconically. "Water's sure to find its level!"

Others in the Court were more considerate. They appreciated Nona's pretty figure, which a scant eighteen years had ripely developed, her abundance of black hair, which needed no "rat" or "switch," her rose-tinted cheeks, her unclassical little nose and her red lips, the upper one of which was full "as

though some bee had stung it newly." Between the top of high-heeled slipper and dress showed an engaging flash of ankle, her hands and feet were small, and she wore a wide-brimmed hat of lingerie that appeared in excellent taste.

"If it wasn't for her eyes," said the Court, "she'd be pretty as a picture. Anyhow, she's a good house-keeper, an' she'd make just the kind of a wife a ball player ought to have."

Fleming alone made use of the incident. Hopping up the steps he followed Mrs. O'Hara indoors and tapped her familiarly on the shoulder. "Little bit of all right," he gushed confidentially. "Can't fool y'r Uncle Dudley. Reg'la' seer, I am. Saw it coming a month ago. Nix on th' bark thing," he added quickly, as the landlady frowned. "All masonic; never talk in my sleep. But say, madam, she couldn't do better—five thousand dollars per for The Dasher. That's what he gets—saw his check. An' he's a good spender. Live like a lady, Nona will. Play the game—got his goat. Call on me f'r best man!"

Mrs. O'Hara gestured annoyedly, but could not

wholly suppress a glint of satisfaction. Fleming reckoned it worth two weeks' credit.

Misled by newspaper fiction Mrs. O'Hara had no doubt that Montague's salary was five thousand dollars, or even ten thousand dollars, so fabulously were ball players supposed to be rewarded. She would hardly have taken it seriously had The Dasher himself assured her that for his expert services as third baseman he was receiving but fifteen hundred dollars, a grievance which, during the first year of his association with the Pioneers, he had borne uncomplainingly. In the minor league he had earned seven hundred and fifty dollars, and double this amount looked big then. But now, in his second season, when he had become the most skillful of infielders and base runners, when he alone was an attraction for thousands, he knew that he had been selected by the club owner, Eben Thayer, as a victim of unfairness and strange injustice.

At times The Dasher had a mind to advertise his indignity, make it known to the public, thinking that President Thayer would be shamed into giving him a raise. But pride restrained him. Mon-

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tague Dasher, greatest of all third basemen, working for fifteen hundred dollars a year! It was so preposterous that he would be called an easy mark.

"Besides," pointed out Barney McNabb, the manager, "it would be sure to have the opposite effect on that old [prefix of hardy adjectives] gold-digger. He don't care what the public thinks. Th' fans have got t' have baseball, and so long as th' Pioneers play good ball they'd come even if the owner was a wife-beater."

"Well, what's the angle, then?" demanded Dasher querulously. "Any club in the league'll give me three thousand dollars. No need tellin' you what I ought to be getting. Even the Schooners in the outlaw bunch wanted——"

"I know, Dash," interrupted McNabb with a note of helplessness and disgust. "It's a rotten shame, and worse. Three times I went to the front for you, Dash, and couldn't get a stir out of him. Says he lost a lot of money in the stock market this year, the [more hardy adjectives] liar. He always was a miser and always talkin' about what he had to pay for the boys. Most of 'em came in when the



other league started and good ball players was drawin' all kinds of fancy prices. He wouldn't give any of us more than fifteen hundred dollars right now if he had his way. He's the kind that thinks a ball tosser's same as a hod-carrier. But, Dash, I went to th' mat three times for you—on my oath, three times. And you know where I stand, old fellow?" McNabb gestured appealingly.

Sullenly the third baseman reflected a moment, and then: "Mac, I know you done what you could, but"—and McNabb twitched as he saw that nasty determination in The Dasher's eye—"something's going to happen. I won't be anybody's fool forever!"

The Pioneers' manager bent an accusing look upon the other, and the hand, gnarled and broken with years of catching, that he laid upon Dasher's shoulder was no light one. "Nothing like that," he threatened. "Never do anything dirty, Dash. You'll regret it to the last day of your life. You're bound to get what's coming some day. But be on the level and stick. Tell you what," he suggested half-hopefully; "go an' see him yourself. Put it

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straight to him and"—gesturing enticingly—"you never c'n tell."

Montague, still sullen and determined, shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

Eben Thayer was a fat man whose thin, narrow lips spoke and smiled oilily. His small gray eyes were almost hidden by the obese curves of his cheeks, but you quickly learned that from behind those ramparts he kept a shrewd lookout. Over one less trained than himself in worldly wisdom he maintained an ascendancy, even if the suppliant were armed with a righteous cause, and when Dash finally decided to act upon the manager's advice he began to lose control before he started downtown.

Hardened against public admiration, knowing its fickleness, The Dasher, like all his profession, generally acknowledged it with a secret twang of pride; but on this morning he was too absorbed in rehearsing the approaching ordeal. Straphangers, great merchants, even women shoppers, eyed the athlete with a smile of recognition. On the platform of the car two fans had an argument as to whether or not he was "swell-headed." Rich and poor craved a

nod from the Pioneers' third baseman. It was a treat to be near him.

Dasher arrived at the club's headquarters wearing a preoccupied expression which to Eben Thayer was as legible as a fifty-foot signboard. The advantage was so much in the magnate's favor that his narrow mouth stretched a smile of genuine satisfaction. What a bargain he had in this grand ball player! What an object of envy he was among the financiers of the game! How sage were the moulders of organized baseball when they embodied that "reserve clause" in the constitution! Now, when a hardworking owner had the good fortune to pick up a star such as Montague Dasher there was no fear of his "jumping" for more money. He was a human chattel owned outright by the Pioneers, "reserved" in their employ until they chose to sell, trade or release him. If he broke that contract he would be blacklisted throughout the whole country, with no chance of a livelihood in his vocation. If he sulked or "threw" games he could be fined, kept on the bench, or expelled to the tune of the Rogues' March. He had signed for a cer-

tain salary and it was entirely at the option of him—Eben Thayer—whether the amount should be increased then or at any time. But if Montague Dasher broke an arm or leg, became unfit for work, or deteriorated in his play, he could be sent a-packing on ten days' notice. The contract was all one way.

Swiftly the magnate paragraphed this situation, and as the ball player gingerly stepped over the heavy plush carpet he determined not to waver from his policy. He preferred, however, to move along lines of least resistance, and his voice was half-cozening, playfully impressive, as he took up the issue.

"What's that, Dasher? Why, I'm really surprised at you! Only two years in fast company and want another boost? Gracious, man, we got to give the stockholders something! And remember, Dasher, that this club has made you—made you, my boy! Nobody ever heard of you out in th' bushes. You'd be a dead one yet if we hadn't discovered you. And now"—Mr. Thayer's fat hand gestured eloquently—"And now, just think of it;

you are Montague Dasher—The Dasher—third baseman of the Pioneers, champions of the world, and a household word from Portland to Portland! Why, you're a hero!"

Stunned by this oratory The Dasher grinned in whimsical admission. "That's so." He scratched his head. "There's something in that." Unhappily for him his college course had not embraced dialectics, and his blind mental groping amused Mr. Thayer.

"But I sure done a lot for you," he pleaded feebly. "You said yourself that ketching that Texas Leaguer off Mulrooney won th' pennant last year. I ain't hit under three hundred since I joined th' club. An' haven't I got the highest fielding average, and more stolen bases than any man playin' the third corner in major company? If you don't believe me you c'n see it in th' books, or ask McNabb."

Dasher was leaning forward now, his fingers crushing a ten-cent cigar that President Thayer had given him, not neglecting to mention the price. Launched upon a topic with which he was familiar

his blue eyes gleamed with fervent assurance. To him the subject was so vital, its course so plain, that as the magnate smiled benevolently between reflective puffs Montague thought him likewise convinced.

So he continued more aggressively: "An' just look what I'm getting, Mr. Thayer—one thousand dollars under Jessup, on the Prunes, an' two thousand less than Picus, on the Vampires—both dead ones! There ain't a man on the team but's getting more than me, 'cept them two bushers you just bought from the O-P League.

"Hero!" Montague, blindly probing the fallacy of his employer's argument, spat it out with an ugly taste. "Hero! I'm a cheap hero, I am. Give me that five hundred raise McNabb promised an' I'll feel something like!"

Quick to read a countenance The Dasher instantly knew that he had made a vital blunder, but he was not prepared for a revulsion so trenchant. Eben Thayer's smile shifted to a nick in a sword. He planted both substantial feet on the floor, his small even teeth clicked, his chubby fist smote the desk.

"Is that so?" His voice, nasal, sarcastic and penetrating, carried to the outer room where Miss Bangs, the stenographer, and Eddie, the office boy, bobbed their heads at the keyhole. "Well, now, Mr. Dasher, let me tell you something, and—don't—you—forget—it. You've been boosted to fifteen hundred dollars—a darn sight more than Montague Dasher could make at any other job—and you will continue to get it until I decide to give you more. You are a young man starting in the game, and so long as you make good I'll try to do right by you. But don't ever get th' idea that you can dictate, and"—his head jerked sagaciously—"don't start laying down on this club or you'll sit on the bench the rest of your natural life. Miss Bangs"—he raised his voice—"some dictation, please. Good-day, Mr. Dasher."

For a brief moment Montague, with a swift intake of breath through his open mouth, sat as one in a straight jacket, and then made his way automatically, dazedly, over the heavy plush carpet out of the office, down the elevator and up the sunlit street. His mind, after this catastrophe, worked

slowly. He played the game that afternoon skillfully, though in a trancelike grimness, fighting against some great dread that both appalled and tempted him. Every time the fans howled their applause at a fine stop it seemed that a leering specter gallivanted around third base chortling: "Fifteen hundred a year; fifteen hundred, Dasher; that's all you're worth!"

By the time he had dressed and returned to his hall bedroom in the boarding-house Montague's conflicting emotions were arrayed in a semblance of order, but the grievance only waxed more poignant, with no remedy in sight.

Here he was, Montague Dasher, arrived at the age of twenty-four, a superb ball player but with absolutely no other means of livelihood, ordained to move and have his being always under the relentless eye of that mighty, far-reaching, all-powerful empire called organized baseball. His contract, the usual one, bound him for one year and an indefinite "reserve." He must continue to play ball with the Pioneers at the same salary, and continue to play just as brilliantly as heretofore. His ability was



a matter of record, and also his sole asset. Advancement in fame he might have, but none in remuneration. A ripped tendon, chronic "charley horse," or a broken arm at any moment might put him out of the game for good and all. "Grab the coin while you're a star," had been big leaguers' advice to him. "You never know when the buzzards'll get your wing."

Pitying himself and gradually accumulating a portentous hatred for his miserly employer, Dasher's thoughts ticked off too fast for speech. Should he quit the game and try pugilism? Prize fighters had predicted success for him in this activity. How about the stage? More than one ball player had "made a hit" in vaudeville. But why, he asked himself, why, in the name of holy justice, should he be forced out of a profession in which he had worked, oh, so hard, to become adept?

His mind reverted to the days of his youth at the rolling mills in Ohio, where, in the short noon hour, he would gulp his bread and meat and then, begrimed with sweat and soot, hurry out between the railroad tracks to have a couple of innings on

the cindery diamond. It was a rough school. A stolen half-holiday invariably meant a beating from his father, "Bully" Dasher, foreman in Open Hearth No. 1. Montague knew this was coming, but what of it! The warm sting of the horsehide, the clear rap of the ashen bat, the sweet, green field, the open sky, the contest, the victory—it was life to him! Small wonder that with his love for the game one year in fast company had made him a nation's hero. It was fun in those days, but work now, and he wanted his dues from the owner he had helped to make rich.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the unhappy idol of fandom; "why won't he give it to me?" In an agony of bitterness, revenge, what-not, his fist landed on the pillow such a mighty blow that the cheap wooden bed nearly collapsed.

"Hey, whatcher doin'—killin' an umpire?" The "fresh guy," Fleming, poked his head in, and then withdrew it swiftly, for third-baseman Dasher presented a threatening appearance.

"Jest wanted t' give you this article I was readin' about superstitious ball players. It's all right. Say,

Dasher, you'll say it's all right. Funny, you know. You want t' read it. 'S all right, that's what."

Montesquieu used to say that an hour's reading could make him forget any unpleasantness, and it must be concluded from his gradual absorption in Fleming's article that infielder Dasher of the Pioneers shared at least one trait with the French philosopher. Vaguely, at first, he gazed at the column of print, for his brain buzzed and hummed. But after a while Dasher's eye focused on one of the anecdotes so intensely that he appeared to be hypnotized. Silly enough it sounded, and yet in his baseball experience he had seen the best players upset by some freak of superstition.

"It wouldn't be hard to put a jinx on this club," he told himself confidently. "There's a dozen of 'm scared t' death of a wagonload of empty barrels. Miller—he's th' limit. McNabb's a nut himself. By gad, I'd like t' do it; old gold-digger'd never know—get 'em jinxed—set 'em down a couple o' games——"

He stopped short, his jaw hanging loose, then stretched both his arms, his fists partly clenched,

leaned back his head and gave vent to a malicious cackle. "Say, wouldn't she make a corker?" he exclaimed aloud, with strange exhilaration.

"Ho, ho, geewhillikins—if she wouldn't turn the trick!" The countenance that laughed back at him from the mirror was sly. "No; I couldn't do it. Wouldn't be right. Holy bats, no!" But his head wagged only in half-negative. "She'd never know—just try it one game!"

With many an exclamation and fragmentary soliloquy he argued something again and again, peeping at his face in the mirror from time to time. Finally, just as the supper-bell rang, he slapped his leg, grinned, puffed out his cheeks, looked solemn, and then with a half-mirthful determination declared to himself: "By th' bones of Mike Kelly, I'll do it! Yes, sir, I'll hoodoo th' whole darned club, I will. I'll put a jinx on 'em or my name ain't Dasher, an' that goes!"

It was on this same evening that third-baseman Dasher startled Grove's Court by escorting the landlady's daughter to a roof-garden. His resilience and gayety had been craftily subdued while at the

supper-table, but it again escaped after they were settled in the "best seats in the house." Miss O'Hara was considerably amazed at his sudden turn of humor, but very discreetly refrained from mentioning it, a point not overlooked by the naïve Mr. Dasher.

"You know," he whispered, as the performing dogs were announced, "there's one thing I like about you—you don't fan." She accepted the vague compliment in silence.

"At that," Montague leaned closer, "I bet you'd be a good rooter if you saw a couple o' games. Why don't you come up to-morrow?" he invited. "Bet a dollar you'd like it."

"Like it!" exclaimed Miss O'Hara with astonished delight, her eyes illumined by a confusing intensity that caused Dasher to turn away in guilty embarrassment. "I'd simply love it."

At intervals during the evening Montague repeated his invitation, and when bidding Miss O'Hara good-night in the darkened hallway he cautioned her not to tell any one except her mother.

"It's like this," he said, "every one in the house will be talking about it—you know they're a bunch of fanners here. Just you do as I say: come up early an' take that front-row seat I was tellin' you of, and don't let on as if you knew me. If any of th' ball players got wise to us"—he gave her small hand a gentle pressure, and in the semi-darkness quite forgot her visual defection as he noted the graceful lines of her white throat and slender waist—"they'd kid the life out o' me. Ball players—great kidders. You understand, don't you?"

After some hesitancy she finally agreed, and third-baseman Dasher went to his room with a secret buoyancy of heart that was, however, not wholly cloudless.

In his accustomed place at third cushion next day Montague seized line drives, gobbled up grounders and pegged the ball with tremendous force and beautiful precision. Occasionally he snatched a hasty look to his right where a dainty figure, clad in pink, sat quite alone, watching the game with unfeigned interest.

In the eighth inning third-baseman Dasher aston-

ished every one by muffing a foul hoist which he was well under, and a few moments later called forth a roar of denunciation by booting an easy bounder. Manager McNabb said nothing in words, but his scowl, accusing and suspicious, was fixed upon Dasher in such a meaning way that the other players were quick to interpret it.

“Crabber,” “layin’ down,” “throwin’ th’ game,” shot from one to another in words and glances.

Pitcher Miller, the Yeggman, seeing victory slipping away, taxed Dasher openly as the home team came to bat. “I wouldn’t ’a’ thought it of you, Dash,” he complained sadly. “Holy gee, I wouldn’t ’a’ thought it was in ye! That’ll never get you any raise!”

“Forget it,” snapped the other. “You’d do th’ same with a pair o’ eyes like that borin’ yuh!” He turned his head in the direction of the landlady’s daughter.

The Pioneer’s masterful twirler gorged his vision a full minute. “By——” he breathed in awe; “ain’t that fierce! Say, now, ain’t that fierce! Excuse me, Dash; I thought you was throwin’ it into

me for a while. But, say, ain't that something fierce . . ."

The Yeggman had exhausted his vocabulary. "Fer Heaven's sake," he cautioned, "don't tip off th' bunch or they'll all be hoodooed!"

But the ball players instantly knew the truth. "A jinx, a jinx," they whispered along the bench. "Cross-eyed girl sittin' over there back o' third. See her? She's got Th' Dasher. Holy smoke, look at them eyes!"

Like the discreet and experienced manager he was, McNabb did not chasten his men in this hour of peril. He treated the matter just as seriously as they, condoling with The Dasher, bracing up the Yeggman, execrating the jinx and summoning all his occult strategy to outwit it.

"There, there, get that!" he barked, pointing to a piece of white paper that lay in front of the bench. Six substitutes leaped forward, and became tangled up like so many horse-shoe crabs in a mad effort to pick up this omen of bad luck.

"Th' bats, th' bats—look at 'em!" McNabb ges-



tured with trembling hand. Coach and bat-boy cracked their heads as they groveled in the sand, laying the ashen sticks uniformly straight in one long, unbroken line.

"Hey, you, Shrimp!" to the diminutive short-stop. "Blankety-blank-blank-blank your bone head, turn that belt!" The witless infielder had it buckled on the left side. Several of his chosen pals hastened to undo the leather and reverse it.

When the Pioneers went to field in the ninth the substitutes, huddled together on the bench, talked in low, jerky tones of the calamity and strained an anxious gaze at the Yeggman, who savagely decreased the size of his tobacco plug, tightened his belt, and after a malevolent grin that was intended to comfort The Dasher, went through his famed evolutions in "winding up" to hurl the ball. He would not trust himself to turn loose a curve in such a crisis. One foot on the rubber, the other raised, high, he whirled his right arm and let go a fast one to break waist-high over the inside corner of the "dish." But the aim was bad, and—kerchunk—the horsehide buried itself in the ribs of the bat-

ter, who doubled up and curled over the plate. His miserable groan was echoed by McNabb.

In a moment the batter was up, one of his teammates gleefully dancing alongside as he escorted him to first. The Gaycat coaches were ecstatic, maligning the Yeggman with every phrase their tongues could muster. "We got him going—the big stiff—he's yellow!" They made a significant gesture, passing a finger over the neck.

"Steady, steady up!" called The Dasher through his hands. "Don't let her get y'r goat."

"She's got it now," the Yeggman snarled blasphemously, breathing like a foundered horse.

A hit, an error, a passed ball filled the bases, and Yeggman Miller, slamming down the ball, raced to the bench. "Put some one else in; she's got a jinx on me!" he bellowed. Grabbing his sweater he sent one dismayed look at the spot of pink, and darted for the clubhouse.

Downtown, bulletin boards and huge presses were telling the story of defeat, but as is very often the case, the reporters had no notion of the real cause. "Miller Blows Up"; "Dasher Starts a Toboggan

Slide”; “McNabb a Joke Manager!” and so forth.

While unnumbered fans, in the recess between the double-header games, were trying to account for the tragedy, Manager McNabb resorted to new tactics, petting his lanky, muscular south-paw, Husk Magoon, the “Pile-driver,” to whom he made light of the hoodoo. “You know, Husk, that Miller always was superstitious; never’d take berth thirteen. Oh, he’s a joke. Haw, haw! I remember the time——” and he narrated a fiction about the Yeggman to prove what a silly chump he was.

But even as he talked McNabb directed a fearsome eye and bitter invective at the landlady’s daughter. Nor did he object when the players returning from the clubhouse loaded the Pile-driver with every sort of luckcharm at hand—mangy rabbits’ feet, old coins, iron rings, buttons and a clay billiken—until his pockets bulged. Reaching the plate Magoon was summoned back by the trainer, who had run all the way to his boarding-house across the avenue for a precious four-leaf clover nestling in a silver locket. To Gaycat players and reporters there was something suspicious in the

concealed operation of fastening this around the pitcher's neck. They thought he was bracing himself on whisky.

With his full cargo of charms it appeared that Magoon had conjured the evil rays that crisscrossed from the radiant but eccentric orbs of Miss O'Hara. His long, sinewy arm pumped in curves and shoots with bewildering rapidity. From every corner of the field and in suppressed cries from the bench his mates encouraged him :

"Keep it up, Husk, old boy; you kin do it; you got 'em guessin'; make 'em hit; that's a boy, that's a boy!"

But Manager McNabb could see that his renowned port flinger was working under terrible stress. His eyes were twitching, and at times he would straighten up as though some missile had pierced him in the small of the back.

In the fatal seventh, two men on base, the score favoring the Pioneers, 2—I, Magoon stopped to tie his shoelace, and catching Dasher's eye hoarsely asked :

"Is she there yet?"

"She is," came the prompt reply, with what to the Pile-driver's overcharged imagination seemed a lilt of triumph.

Nevertheless, he stuck to his task, tightening up, grunting from the torture, bitter sweat smarting his eyes. Often he reached to his hip-pocket, fondling the three off hindlegs of as many deceased rabbits. Noticing this, a shrewd reporter passed the word that Magoon was putting rosin on his fingers, the better to twist a curve.

"You're a' right," Magoon heard from the Pioneers' third-baseman—heard it above the shrills of mob and howling of the enemy.

"Wha's that, Dash?" he queried off the back of his hand.

"You're a' right. She's clappin' and rootin' for yuh. You've killed th' jinx—you've broken it!"

Forgetting the injunction of his manager the southpaw turned to assure himself and caught the full dazzling cross-fire of the landlady's daughter, who was, in reality, looking at Montague Dasher and no one else. With a desperate shudder Magoon tried to shake off the effect, but his eye was

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strangely ablaze, his grip uncertain, and as he cut loose the ball McNabb, watching him as an executioner would the mortal signal, started from the bench, hands held up invokingly.

Too late! The wildest of wild pitches, barely touching the catcher's mitt; a scurrying of runners as two tallies went over the plate; an ensuing slaughter that taxed the tongue of disappointed fan and sarcastic scribe! Oh, ye hard hearts! Ye cruel, cruel rooters!

As the shades of night curtained that massacre thousands upon thousands tramped down the long runways, some stolid, some jeering, some swearing. "Game had been fixed," was the cry. Only one little body, her glowing cheeks shaded under a wide-brimmed pink hat of lingerie, her eyes cast down, shed a tear for the double defeat. Behind her a brute of a man was shouting to his friend: "Dasher started th' whole blame thing with them two errors. Swell head—that's what's a matter with him—he ought t' be canned!"

The tail-end of the crowd was still shuffling through the gate when a bang fell upon the door

of that proscribed sanctum, the Pioneers' dressing-room, and in bounced President Thayer. For a moment he could not speak, so choked was he with fury.

"Well!" he screeched. "What in —— is the trouble now?"

If one dropped a lighted match in a barrel of giant powder the result could hardly have been more violent. Twenty-five naked athletes, some dripping from the shower, rushed the magnate to a corner, threatening his very life.

"Trouble! Trouble!" they all howled. "You old billy-goat, you hamfatter, you blank-blank old gold-digger, you piece of cheese! Trouble!"

Vaguely Eben Thayer afterward recalled that the bat-boy hurled a soaked sponge at him and the trainer brandished a cake of soap.

"Trouble! We had a jinx! A jinx, d'ye hear?" The magnate did not understand.

"Jinx! A hoodoo! Cross-eyed girl in pink, settin' over by third base! Didn't you see her, you son of a dead skunk, you misbegotten bonehead, you, you ——! A jinx! A hoodoo! Trouble?"

A swirl of naked, damp bodies that rocked the clubhouse, and Eben Thayer found himself chucked out of the door, and as the uproar waxed and fist blows resounded he tottered to the counting-room. Flopping in a chair he vented his feelings upon Evans, secretary of the club and buffer for the president.

"Fire 'em, Evans!" he cried hysterically. "Fire th' whole damned shootin' match! McNabb's a loafer, an incompetent, chicken-hearted loafer. What d'ye think?—says they were hoodooed! Ever hear of such nonsense in y'r life? Two games lost—knocked out of first place. Evans, wire all the bush leaguers we got strings on. Bring 'em here. I'll get a whole new club. I'll show 'em who owns the Pioneers. Put me out of th' clubhouse—my clubhouse! They did. Hoodooed—that's their excuse!" His ironical laugh suggested the madhouse.

Tactfully the secretary endeavored to sympathize and point out that if an Englishman's home is his castle the dressing-room of a big league ball club is a veritable bastille. "I'd just let them alone, Mr.



Thayer; they'll fight it out among themselves. They always do. Anything for an excuse, but you know they are the most superstitious people. I remember——"

"Well, I tell you one thing I won't have," interrupted the magnate with an emphatic whine. "They got to keep this quiet, Evans. You go tell 'em. We'll be the joke of the league, a laughing-stock from Dan to Beersheba. You tell 'em that, Evans. Just think what that sneaking reporter, Curtis, would do to us, always boosting the other club!" Blustering and fuming around the room, Eben Thayer finally climbed into his motor car and departed.

In his duty of handy man to a baseball magnate Secretary Evans had encountered many an unpleasantness, but this new task—the chasing of a hoodoo, keeping the story from nosing reporters, propitiating the players and his employer day after day as the team met successive defeats—soon began to rack his nerves. Twice he filled up the front rows with "paper," gave tickets to the park attachés and friends of the groundkeeper, thinking to blot the

jinx from view. But Nona was easily spotted several rows back, with the usual result. Mr. Evans also ordered a couple of the good-looking substitutes to stand at the gate and strike up a flirtation with the jinx. But Nona never even looked at them, or—did she? As for charms, amulets, emblems of good luck, Evans bought them by the score, charging the expense to “grandstand repairs,” fearing otherwise that the magnate would “throw another fit.”

Meanwhile, at the park, in his office, at the restaurant where he dined nightly, Evans had to answer questions, questions, questions. Was it that “cliques” had disrupted the club? Had the pitchers gone lame? Were the Pioneers in a “batting slump”? Was McNabb “incompetent”? Some twitted him about his sudden generosity in giving away passes, for, with the Pioneers dropped to fourth place, patronage had dwindled miserably.

There were no fights in the clubhouse now, no pepper, no kidding or pleasantry. Like the dream of Brutus before the battle of Pharsalia, the hoodoo had produced a species of irresolution and de-

spondency which was the principal cause of their losing one battle after another. Montague, sitting before his locker pulling on his stockings, glanced around the circle and was moved to repentance.

Here and there he saw a teammate, married and with family, who so blithely a week ago had talked of the pennant prize—what he would do with it. The only player with whom he was at all intimate had a consumptive sister who received a moiety of his wages.

Begun in a joke, his scheme had “worked” with unthought-of success. Revenge, after all, was not so sweet, and besides, it brought him no nearer to his goal—a raise in salary. But more than that——

Dasher, always a quick dresser, had left the clubhouse and was walking meditatively down the avenue. His thoughts were upon Nona and they disturbed him acutely. His conscience cried aloud against his despicable ruse of employing her to attain a selfish end. What a charming companion she had been in the evening as they walked together or attended shows! How regardful she was of his

comforts—a flower on his dresser, a button sewed on his coat, a picture on the wall—and he making capital of her misfortune!

“You dog!” gritted Montague. “You ought t’ be ashamed ever to look her in the face. You’ll certainly get——”

“Hello, Dash—always first man to the dining-room, eh?” It was McNabb, his hair grayer, more lines in his countenance. He assumed cheerfulness.

“You beat it before I saw you, an’ missed the news. Don’t laugh, now.” He playfully squeezed The Dasher’s shoulder. “But I was just tellin’ the boys what our friend Eben handed me last night. He’s gettin’ so bughouse over this—this slump—that he says he’ll give five hundred dollars cash to any of the boys who c’n chase th’ jinx! What d’ye think of that, eh? ‘Ain’t that a good one?”

“Chase her!” exclaimed Montague with apprehension.

“Well, you know, meet her someway an’ keep her away. The old goat thinks she’s responsible for the whole thing, an’ I’ll admit she’s a jinx—worst I ever saw. But we was due for a slump, anyway,

that's what I think; just happened to start that first day you piped her off. An' I was just sayin' to myself, as I saw you ahead here: 'Dasher'd be the guy.' Go on; I'll give yuh a day's leave of absence. Be a detec', follo' her home, see where she lives. If I was as good-lookin' as you I'd do it. Maybe the [prefix of hardy adjectives] old gold-digger'd come across on a raise. Hey, why don't you go to it?"

Montague walked on in silence. At the corner he halted, and facing the other he said solemnly: "I been to it, Mac!"

"What's that—you got a line; you——!"

"I met her last night, that's what I mean. I—think—I can fix it," replied Montague thoughtfully. "Is that right about the old robber? How do I know if he'll make good? Think he will?"

"Think it! I know it, Dash. No, I'll say this for him—he keeps his word on them things. If he says he'll raise a man a certain time he does it. He's stingy, but you can rely on him that way."

"Well, you fix it up with him, Mac. An' remember this is under y'r belt an' his. Don't let any of the boys know anything about it. I ain't sayin' I

can pull it off, mind you. I jest happened to meet her with some friends last night—that's a fact. I'm just thinkin'. I don't know how I c'd do it now."

McNabb puckered his face and meditated. "You c'd take her to th' beach or somewhere th' next couple of days. I c'd use Cartwright at third. We go West then; you know how we are on the road—better'n on the home grounds. But then that last series here finishin'. If she came up again——! Well," sighed McNabb, "see what you can do, Dash. I'll take care of the other part. S'long."

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Three days afterward, late at night, a small party of steadfast rooters at the Grand Union station bade the Pioneers good-by on their trip West and reflected some of the animation that rioted inside the special car—rioted because of two hard-fought victories which had broken the string of ghastly defeats. Like children the big leaguers lifted their voices in song, "rousted" the porter, fired pillows at one another and laughed for sheer joy of hearing themselves laugh. It was a new deal.

"Soon as I come up," shouted an outfielder, "an'

seen she wasn't there it seemed as if I c'd hit anything. A spitter, too, Wiggs give me—that un I rode for three bases. Say, she was breakin' some!"

"'Member when I crossed old Parker on the hit an' run? Say, I'll never ferget his face—had him by three weeks at second!" The backstop's throaty chuckle was sweet music to the soul of Manager McNabb. Every one talked at once.

As the fast train whizzed through town and countryside and the players, one by one, stretched out in their berths, Pitcher Miller for the tenth time related fondly: "A minute more an' me an' The Dasher's mixed it up—that's th' way I felt. Then what'd you say, Dash? Oh, yes, he says: 'Fergit it; you'd do th' same with a pair o' eyes like that——'"

"Shut up—cut it out," chorused a dozen voices. "That's all in th' book. Cut it out—th' hay fer yours, Yeggman."

Manager McNabb was last to bed. "It's a road team, this is," the men heard him say; "I want seventeen games—we'll go through 'em like a rat up a pump."

Following hard upon a sporting tragedy that had convulsed a whole nation the Pioneers' striking reversal in form quickly became known in big headlines—"Champions Win Three Straight"; "Pioneers Hit Their Gait"; "Pioneers Will be Contenders, Says McNabb"; "Pioneers: One, Two, In The Race." Nothing could stop McNabb's men. Their pitchers made strike-out records; their sluggers broke fences, took all sorts of chances on bases and got away with them, and always was Montague Dasher the brightest star in a dazzling firmament.

So swiftly does hero worship ebb and flood that when the Pioneers returned home in second place a crowd of many hundreds panted to satisfy their gaze and mark each individual player as the train pulled in.

"That's Brewster—tell by his scar—see him?"

"Looky, th' Yeggman—pitched a no-hit game against the Prunes!"

"Where's Th' Dasher—that him?"

"No, it's Carroll, th' new infielder."

"There goes McNabb—every one together now; three cheers for McNabb!"



Through this press the big leaguers, timid of such near applause, waded unceremoniously. Shrewd judges could see that they were on edge. Every ounce of muscle, every drop of blood, every particle of brain had been exerted in their desperate fight to reach first place. But their eyes were clear.

As for third-baseman Dasher, he escaped by a roundabout way, hurriedly refreshed his toilet, and twelve o'clock found him approaching a huge gray-stone building that bore the legend: "Eye and Ear Hospital." He was up the steps in a bound.

With some labor he wrote on a card "M. Dasher," and shoved it over the desk. "I'd like to see Miss O'Hara," he asked eagerly.

The smug official did not even glance at the inscription. "Say, don't you know that th' visiting hour is one o'clock?" He waved to the gauntlet of anxious faces, mostly women, who sat along each side of the wide hall.

"That's too bad," answered Montague, crest-fallen. "I got to go t' work pretty soon. I thought—thought maybe I could see this party. I got t' go to work——"

"We don't show no partiality here," sharply from the other. "Take your turn with the rest."

"That's too bad," reiterated Montague helplessly. "I couldn't wait that long. We got a double-header to-day. We——"

"A what?" exclaimed the desk man interestedly. He looked at the card, then at the petitioner. His mouth gaped foolishly, his eyes bulged. "This ain't —ain't The Dasher?" he asked.

"That's what they call me," replied Montague seriously.

The desk man almost fell off his high stool and skipped upstairs. He returned fawning and important. His long absence was accounted for by the silent adulation of nearly every employee in the hospital who had been acquainted with the visitor's identity—scrubwomen, nurses, surgeons, convalescents peeped from doors, lingered in the halls, hung over banisters. Dasher saw none of them.

Reaching their destination the desk man opened the door to a darkened room. "It's all right for you," he grinned and scraped. "Doctor Stevens says you're to go right in."

For a moment Dasher could see nothing.

"I'm 'way over here," spoke a soft voice. There was something in the warmth, music, pathos of the notes that gave the ball player a sudden thrill. Tip-toeing to the front of the room he could distinguish the form of the landlady's daughter partly stretched out on an invalid chair. Wide blue glasses shielded her eyes. Her hand, white and slender, reached toward him. Dasher took it in both his rugged "bread-winners." Unknowingly he manipulated it like a hot grounder.

"Ouch!" cried Nona; "you squeeze something awful." Both laughed and The Dasher was more at ease.

Again he took her hand, but tenderly.

"Was that right—what your mother said in her letter? Did—did they fix you up?"

"Oh, Mr. Dash——"

"Say," pleaded Montague, "if it's just th' same, why don't you call me 'Monte'—you did one night."

The girl was silent.

"Was there much pain?" he asked huskily.

"No; I don't suppose so," answered Nona with a shiver. "They gave me some drug when they—operated, cut the cords, you know. Afterward, though, it hurt, hurt——"

Her small hand tightened within his two. In that fragment of time a mighty wave of desire, a whelming sense of protectiveness, a fierce yearning flooded the ball player's soul. His very spine chilled. He scarcely heard her as she went on:

"It'll only be a week or so when I can go out in the daylight, but I'll have to keep the glasses on a couple of months. The doctors have been perfectly sweet to me."

"Young fellows?" Montague recovered abruptly.

"Oh, no. Doctor Stevens is over fifty, and Doctor Sparks is forty-five at least. They're in that next room. They want to see you. They read all about you to me every day. They are so kind. Everybody is so good—oh, Mr. Dasher"—her voice trembled—"I don't know why you ever went to this expense for me. I don't know how we're ever going to repay you. I would have had to go through life—always. The girls used to cross their fingers when they met

me. No one would sit with me at school. My mother——”

There were great tears in the ball player's eyes. He silenced her with a strong grip. “Promise me,” he begged, “that you will never say anything about——about me doing this. You promise? Don't——don't thank me. I had th' money—I never done anything much for anybody——always lookin' out f'r myself. An' I guess I'm happier th'n you. I guess I am,” he said with emphasis. Her hand lay limp.

With the quick determination his profession had engendered Montague rose to his feet. “We got a double-header today, Nona,” he said. “You'll excuse me, won't you? I'll be back soon as it's over. I got t' go. It's a double-header.”

He opened the door briskly, cleared his throat, and addressed a pair of twinkling eyes that had been fixed on a microscopic lens. “I'm the man,” he announced with a note of pride and holding his head high, “that's paying Miss O'Hara's bill.” In business fashion he counted over five one-hundred-dollar bills and laid them on the table.

"Well, sir, I am certainly glad to meet you, Mr. Dasher." The bald-headed surgeon, without even glancing at the money, offered his hand. "First time we ever saw you at close range." He gestured toward his confrère, who grinned with a rooter's grin. "Both fans, we are, worst in the world. Never miss a game when we can get off. And, what do you think—Doctor Sparks there has bet me one hundred dollars that the Pioneers won't win the pennant?" It was questioning.

Montague, with his dislike for fanning, touched the greenbacks. "I just wanted to ask you, Doctor, is that right? Will her eyes be straight now—will they be like—like any other 'girl's?" His countenance was mistrusting and anxious.

"My boy," assured the surgeon, "she's all right now; the operation was entirely successful. All she needs is to be a little careful for some time not to strain her eyes. You're a lucky chap, Dasher, confounded lucky. A braver girl I never saw. Everybody fell in love with her here." He folded the bills and handed them back. "Put that in your pocket, sir. Do you think we'd take a cent from you?"

Why, we're thirty-third degree fans, aren't we, Doctor?"

"Well, I should say so—the original article, Dasher." Doctor Sparks rubbed his hands gleefully. "Only way you can repay us is to win that pennant. I've made a bet with Stevens here, but that's nothing. I'd give five times that to see you come out on top."

Montague, astonished, glanced from one to the other. "S-say, you're not kiddin' me?" he asked.

"No, no!" returned the bald-headed surgeon peremptorily. "You and Mrs. Dasher"—he dug the third baseman in the ribs—"use that five hundred for your wedding trip." He winked and laughed.

The ball player colored from the top of his white collar to the edge of his sunburned forehead. He felt a moisture in his eyes and was overcome. Gripping the surgeons until they winced he fled as abruptly as he had entered.

"Well, I swear!" exclaimed specialist Sparks; "that fellow really appears to have some feeling.

You'd never think it! He's a sullen demon in a game."

"Rats!" jeered the other. "If you weren't such a dried-up old cynic you could see that the Pioneers' third-baseman is head over heels in love. That's what's the matter with him."

"By jingoes!" ejaculated Doctor Sparks sorrowfully; "I'm afraid it's good-by pennant then, Stevens. He'll never be able to get his mind on the game."

"Nonsense," snapped Doctor Stevens, turning 'down his cuffs, the rooter's light of battle already in his eyes. "Nerves of steel—forget all about her when he gets in the game. Come on; it's nearly time to start. If you want to make that two hundred, I'm willing."

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Two weeks later Montague Dasher marched into the Pioneers' headquarters and with dignified gesture introduced: "My wife, Mr. Thayer!" The magnate beamed, bowed as eloquently as his fat body would permit and paid suitable compliment to the rosy cheeks and blue goggles. While his



world-famous third-baseman was signing a new contract at a thousand dollars advance in the secretary's room and getting a check for five hundred dollars extra, President Thayer entertained himself and Nona with a sprightliness quite unusual.

"Too bad, Mrs. Dasher, you couldn't 'a' seen that last game. Your husband won it for us—won th' pennant. Say, it was a wonder, a heartbreaker! You may know—one man dropped dead from the excitement—had to cart him away in th' ambulance. Exciting! Gee-whiz!

"Imagine! Score two to two, last inning, one man out, Monte on first. He can score from second on a long single, you know. But that blockhead Carter had to raise a fly! Fly, mind you; confound—— Oh, well. Did the best he could. Right field she went, and Dasher was off soon as Hagan caught the ball. One chance in a thousand. Hagan—grand thrower. Put my hands over my eyes—thought sure it was all over. Then a yell broke loose. Holy Christmas! Dasher was there on second. Beat th' throw. Only man in fast company could 'a' done it.

"Little Barry come up, weakest hitter on th' club. Thirty-two thousand there—crazy—just crazy, that's all. I was worse th'n any of 'em. Bit right through that cigar-holder. See there! Given to me by th' Masons, too. Didn't look as if there was a chance in th' world. Our pitchers were all in; another inning they'd 'a' gone to pieces. McNabb said so himself. Dasher takes a big lead, and th' minute Hepburn turns to throw to second, Dasher shoots like a coyote, like a coyote, Mrs. Dasher, fall-away slide—steals third.

"Course you heard about him stealing home? What! He's a queer fellow! Talk o' the whole country. Most wonderful thing ever happened in baseball." Eben Thayer pranced about the room, on his short legs, his face crimson with the exertion, his pig eyes dancing, as he illustrated this historic event, what every player did, how the Gaycats tried to assault the umpire, the arrival of police, and the parade over the field of ten thousand fans bearing Dasher aloft on shoulders.

"By gracious!" He sank down on the revolving chair out of breath and mopped the perspiration on

his forehead. "Too bad, too bad," he consoled, "you couldn't 'a' seen it, Mrs. Dasher." Recovering presently, he inquired: "Didn't you see any of the games this season?"

Nona, her face flushed with pleasure at hearing the recital of her husband's prowess, frowned whimsically. "Well, yes, I did, Mr. Thayer," she admitted; "but it was the strangest thing. Every single time I went the Pioneers lost. I began to think I must be a hoodoo. And, oh, I did root so hard for Monte, and—and all of them."

"Eh—eh, what did you—when was that? Was it in August you went up?—August—middle of August?"

"Yes," answered Nona, startled by the magnate's intense concern; "that's just when it was. I wouldn't 'a' gone up if it hadn't been for Monte——"

"Hey there, what you doin'—taking my name in vain?" The Dasher, folding his contract and check, stepped in, laughing, heart-free. Then, noting the ashen, flabby face of the Pioneers' president, he sent a flash of inquiry:

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"Wha's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Nona. "Mr. Thayer's been terribly interesting, describing to me all about the last game. I was telling him about my being a hoodoo. I——"

"Wha's that—he said you was a hoodoo?" The Dasher took a step forward, and the magnate crowded against the back of his chair.

"No, no," corrected Nona; "I was telling Mr. Thayer how the club lost every time I went up, until I began to think I was a hoodoo. It was strange, wasn't it?" she appealed to both.

Slowly the color returned to the magnate's putty cheeks. A hard loser, he could not but have some respect for this sort of shrewdness. Rising abruptly, his eye evaded The Dasher's, and he tried to peer through those blue goggles. "I bid you good-by," he breathed heavily. "I hope you have a pleasant journey."

Outside, in the marble-flanked hallway, as they were waiting for the elevator, Nona lifted the glasses a moment and tilted her chin.

"Monte, Mr. Thayer looked at me so queerly.

Tell me, honest and true, are my eyes straight—just  
—just like other girls’?”

“Well,” said Montague, tenderly replacing the  
glasses with one hand, his right fist unconsciously  
hardening, “I’d like to see the guy that says they  
ain’t.”

## A BREAK IN TRAINING

LATE one drizzly afternoon in October, Left-fielder Dan Bunts and Catcher Steve—"Big Steve"—Doyle were beginning to feel the effects of many libations which, though parographed from Harlem to West Street, seemed by the very leisure of their absorption to have accrued a strange potency. Claspings a wellworn suitcase in his right breadwinner, whence glistened a three-carat chunk of "ice," the National League's hardest hitter vigorously but uncertainly led the way, as he thought, to the Boston steamship docks. Directly in his wake followed catcher Doyle, similarly encumbered and adorned. "Wet grounds—no game" had provided this opportunity for a short break in training; but, a double-header being scheduled in Boston next day, they were loath indeed that the manager or captain of the club should observe their plight.

"Like as not Mac'll be at the gate countin' off th' bunch," urged Steve thickly, elbowing a commuter.

"'F he is," muttered Bunts, "we got t' lay low. Maybe we c'n crawl in the basement somehow."

Confused by the stir of traffic, swept by the rain now blowing in torrents, oppressed by fear of Manager Barney McNabb's wrath, the two ballplayers zigzagged under a high vaulted roof among piles of merchandise. An endless stream of trucks lumbered back and forth.

"Gangway! Gangway!" they heard at every turn; and stevedores, grinning maliciously, bumped these national heroes with no more consideration than if they had been immigrants.

Jostled into a grotto of temporary safety, Big Steve laid hands upon a person who commanded his attention by reason of a nautical cap. "Say, old boy, y' belong to th' boat?"

"Hey, un'er y'r belt!" put in leftfielder Bunts pleadingly. "You know—— Just a lit'l' afternoon 'th friends. Get's on quiet; we'll make 't all right. Be goo' fella!"

The mariner scrutinized the strangers closely, noting the weather-beaten skin, capable hands and well-knit figures that showed unusual strength despite their swaying.

"Well, now," he suggested—"you want to see the captain, don't you?"

The extreme fervency of their denials, the fresh vigor of their imprecations against any such calamity, somewhat puzzled the other.

"I'm mate of this windjammer," the stranger said slowly, "and have no wish to get into trouble. The captain told me to be on the lookout for you." He paused. "Don't want to see the captain?"—grinding his eye over the huge proportions of catcher Doyle.

"Captain, manager—none of th' team, y'un'erstan'!" they protested. "Jes' get us on—Lay low t'll morning—Sleep it off—Make 't a' right 'ith you—Un'erstan'?—Un'er y'r belt!—Jes' get us aboard."

Shortly after midnight, when the three-masted schooner Melrose, bound from New York to the River Plate with a general cargo, was abeam of



Sandy Hook, Captain Ross ordered the watch to close-haul and set the main staysail. There was a fair breeze, a bright moon, and the trim vessel slipped over the silver-crested waves as noiselessly as a great bird. Before the mate, Mr. Evans, who was just as Welsh as Captain Ross was Scotch, turned in, the master of the Melrose, himself a trifle hectic, announced that in his opinion the newly shipped sailors had been sufficiently rested.

"Wear diamonds, eh?" he grunted jeeringly. "Glass, you mean. P'r'aps they're dagos."

"No fear, sir," from the mate. "They look like downright Yankees. I was surprised clean through. Haven't seen a genuine American sailor come aboard in ten years."

"We'll have a peek at them," decided Skipper Ross, with no great intensity, though he was plainly interested.

Tacking to leeward, captain and mate stepped over loosened tackle, past the galley, and, plucking a smoky lantern from a beam near the forecastle door, went directly to the bunks from which wafted jarring snores.

"Crimes o' Paris!" uttered the master of the Melrose. "They'd open the seams o' the ship! Mr. Evans, shove this bully in the ribs. By crimes! He is a little bit of all right. Never thought that crimp'd get hold of the like. From what he said I expected a couple o' wharf-rats that had to get away from the police. Diamonds!"

Mate Evans, prodding catcher Doyle with a rough hand, a freedom from which any player in fast company would have shrunk, caused the big fellow to turn toward the light and toss his hand over the bunkside. The setting of his massive ring, purchased with a month's salary from Diamond Joe, gleamed even in that murky illumination. The backstop's thick, muscular neck was exposed; likewise a tattooed emblem on his forearm.

"Well, well!" laughed Skipper Ross, with triumphant humor. "That's one on you, Evans. Nothing but a big piece of glass—that's what it is. But, see there!" pointing to the India-ink American flag. "A sailor for fair and a knockout. Probably a man-o'-war's-man taking it on tick. I'll make a second mate of him, Evans, and send that half-

breed lubber forward. Wake 'em up, lad; hand 'em one in the ribs. Crimes o' Paris! I'll give him Ju-Ju's berth in the cabin."

Mate Evans, a rawboned, sea-hardened output from Cardiff, tried a species of jiu-jitsu this time, twisting Big Steve's wrist and simultaneously twisting what was left of a nose that had been sadly damaged by a spitball.

The result was sudden and unexpected. Mr. Doyle, resting none too comfortably on an empty stomach, sprang upward, cracked his head on the berth above, hurled himself out and, leaping to his feet, yelled: "Shoot it, Jack! Shoot it! Home! Home!"

He clapped his big mitts together, caught an imaginary ball, and, seeing the master of the Melrose in a half-crouching position, "put it on" him for as fair an out as ever an umpire called.

"I got him!" exulted the National League's brawniest catcher. "I got him!" His clenched fist landed in the captain's eye.

"You did, eh?" howled the infuriated navigator. Straightening up, he capsized Steve, upset the lan-



THEY FINALLY TUMBLED THROUGH THE DOORWAY INTO THE BROAD LUSTRE  
OF A FULL MOON.



tern, and together they whirled into the bunk occupied by leftfielder Bunts.

Fully aroused from his crapulous nightmare, Mr. Doyle conceived the notion that he was an object of plundering assault. Even as he crooked one stout arm about the mariner's neck he felt for the band of gold and its costly setting. Its presence stimulated him to resistless exertion.

"Dan! Dan!" he yelled, as skipper and catcher rolled on the floor. "Get up! Look out! Thieves! Y'r diamond!—" His speech was cut short with a gurgle-gurgle, for Captain Ross buried his sinewy fingers in the big leaguer's neck.

Leftfielder Bunts took in the situation as though it were an organized play, and, flinging himself on the struggling forms, luckily clenched the shipmaster's whiskers with a fierce grip.

Mate Evans, momentarily palsied by the adventure, recovered himself and joined the animated mass which swayed and lurched in the narrow aisle and finally tumbled through the doorway into the broad luster of a full moon.

The majesty of an autumn heaven—stars, plan-

ets, milky way; the spread of bellying canvas, the long, rolling, silvered waves, the pitch and toss of the schooner, the gathering of black faces, the hoarse orders of captain and mate—what in the name of reason could it all mean?

The Melrose carried only three sailors in each watch—black boys from the Western Islands—besides a second mate, who hailed from Brazil, and a Chinese cook. Obedient to the master's partly stifled commands, delivered in a hybrid dialect, these came to the rescue, some armed with belaying-pins. In the distorted imaginations of Messrs. Bunts and Doyle they suggested goblins, ogres, something unearthly.

The two were clad in their underclothes—sleeveless shirts and knee-breeches. Thus unhampered and easily discerning their immediate enemies, they fought with frenzied energy.

Though not so massive as his fellow leaguer, leftfielder Bunts was regarded as a bad man to tackle on field or in clubhouse. He stood an even six feet, was built proportionately and had panther-like quickness. A pitcher by occupation, he devel-

oped such hitting ability that Manager McNabb had shifted him to the left garden, using him in the box only on occasions. His wits were more nimble than the catcher's; so it was he that first realized the situation.

Disposing of the Welsh mate with a deft and vicious right swing, Mr. Bunts shouted:

"We've been kidnapped Steve! They drugged us. Wallop that old duffer. He's the manager!"

Bunts laid two black men low, chased another around the galley house and turning the second corner ran into the cook, whom he flattened with a blow in the neck. Big Steve found the schooner's captain, for all the grizzled whiskers and fifty years, a surprisingly tough customer. Over and over they rolled, hands gripping each other's neck, hot breath meeting hot breath, and gasping oaths of their several vocations—that is to say, catcher Doyle used the strong and unprintable language of the ballfield, while Captain Ross confined himself to the harmless oath, "Crimes o' Paris!" an expression which, for him—a stern Scotch Presbyterian—covered the gamut of blasphemy. He felt



a secret pride in having coined the phrase after a two-days' sojourn in the gay French capital. But, if obedient to the Third Commandment, Captain Ross was in nowise hampered by the Beatitudes. Feeding his men on decayed horsemeat, robbing them of wages and hazing them with overwork was for him a matter of business.

Backstop Steve Doyle, of course, knew nothing of these eccentricities. He was "up against" a stout opponent and it required all his strength to finally drive the shipmaster against the bulwarks so hard that he lay there limp as a wet towel.

Puffing for wind, Big Steve leaned up against the galley. His heart, from fright and exercise, beat like a steam riveter.

"Wha' is it, Dan?" he wheezed.

"Jes' what I said, Steve. Somebody kidnapped us. Knockout drops. Must 'a' been in that last saloon. I've read about such things. Oh, great kingdom, Steve! What'll McNabb say? We throwed him down once, an' he said——"

"Zwush!"

A nasty thud and Leftfielder Bunts flopped to the deck without a quiver. After the fashion of his race, the Chinese cook had crawled to the roof of the galley and an iron belaying-pin did the rest. Big Steve wheeled about, got tangled in a coil of rope, and, losing his balance, fell heavily; and quick as one might dump the ball and start for first base half a dozen sailors were atop of him. At the same time Mate Evans arrived and smote the hero with the butt end of a heavy revolver. Also Skipper Ross, for good measure, added sundry kicks and blows until catcher Doyle and leftfielder Bunts were as ignorant of their whereabouts as Manager Barney McNabb, who was at that very hour searching the luxurious Boston steamer for his two high-priced stars. McNabb, in a wretched mood, walked the decks all night, taking his only hope in a chance that Doyle and Bunts had missed the boat and were traveling by train.

"They may have been held up or got to gambling, but they'd never throw me down at this stage of the game by going on a spree," he argued

with the club's secretary. "Why, man, it means a couple of thousand apiece if we win four out o' the next eight games. Think Big Steve'd let that get by him? Nix."

Manager McNabb conjured a number of excuses for the catcher and fielder, but not in his wildest dream could he have imagined them lying under a tarpaulin, almost naked, bumping each other on the foredeck of a schooner that was charging into head-seas of the Atlantic Ocean.

Dry-throated, empty-stomached, every bone and joint aching, the two athletes were apprised of the dawn's early light by Captain Ross, who soused them with a pail of sea water.

"Fetch another!" he commanded one of the crew.

Messrs. Doyle and Bunts scrambled to their feet and backed against the forecastle, holding the canvas in front of them.

"Don't! For the love of Heaven, don't!" cried the catcher, brine stinging his eyes, his mighty shoulders shuddering.

"Don't! For the love o' Mike! Please don't,

sir!" chattered the intrepid Bunts, cringing, spineless and terror-stricken.

Captain Ross fingered a bright revolver; and, to judge by his ferocious appearance, he proposed instant assassination. The skipper's upper lip was puffed, two front teeth were missing and an ugly wound on his forehead marked the size of Steve Doyle's diamond.

Possibly he knew that the puffed lip made him look a trifle silly, for his invective was unusually scathing as he talked of "double irons," "mutiny" and "twenty years' imprisonment." His red cheeks were almost purple from ill-contained rage. Shouting and ranting, he galloped up and down as he gripped his pistol and occasionally caressed his bruised lip.

"It's a mistake—mistake—a fierce mistake!" Doyle and Bunts reiterated. In a momentary lull Big Steve managed to announce:

"But, mister, we ain't sailors at all!" Then, a little louder and with an inflection of pride: "We're ballplayers!"

"World's champions!" put in Bunts. "This

is Big Steve Doyle," waving one arm tremblingly.

"This is Dan Bunts; used to be pitcher—left-fielder now," introduced Doyle.

"Show 'em your hand, Steve," suggested Dan, for Captain Ross appeared to be skeptical. At least, he raised his eyebrows and his face wore an inscrutable expression. Steve displayed his throwing hand, with its broken and gnarled digits.

"Baseball players, eh?" inquired the skipper, with a jeering relish that escaped the big leaguers.

"That's right; you got it," they chorused, honey-mouthed. How easy it would be now! The magic of that word—baseball! The might of those names—Doyle and Bunts! Another rooter, this grim seafarer. Very likely he would be wanting to "fan" presently.

Big Steve regained his doughty bearing.

"An' if it's all the same to you, Cap, you c'n put us on that steamer over there." He pointed to a plume of smoke and a long black hull. "We'll pay you for th' trouble. Certainly's a good joke on us." Mr. Bunts joined in the laugh.

"Ballplayers, eh?" The skipper of the Melrose twisted his swollen lip into a queer grimace.

"Sure!" promptly replied the cheerful Bunts. "We're with th' Pioneers. Barney McNabb's our manager. Heard o' Barney, haven't you? Well, say, Cap, we're in pretty bad. Barney'll give us thunder f'r missin' that battle today. Only eight more games, y' know. Got t' win the pennant. Can't you signal that steamer? Be a good fella. We'll make it worth y'r while." He motioned in the location of his trousers pocket. "Or, maybe you c'd put us on shore——"

"BALLPLAYERS!"

It was the roar of a prehistoric animal. Even the black crew shrank from the terrific blare and the brandished revolver. "Ballplayers? Loafers! Drunkards! Scum of the earth! I'll ballplay you! I got you—you snakes, you scorpions, you hell cast-offs! Oh, don't I know you! Go round th' country with your diamonds luring innocent girls from home. By the crimes o' Paris! Want to go to sea, eh? Well, you're going then, by Crimes!—going to the River Plate and to the Bight of Benin

and then to China. Ha! Ha! Ballplayers!" He stopped abruptly. "Get below! Put some clothes on. See this?" He waved the pistol. "If you raise a hand to me just once I'll shoot your heads off."

It was nearly ten o'clock when Steve and Dan had an opportunity to converse. Clad in cast-off overalls stiff with paint, hobnailed shoes and cheap soiled sweaters, they lurched about doing odd jobs on deck. Their breakfast of weak coffee, a hunk of salt meat and biscuit was but a memory and an ugly one. At six bells Mate Evans ordered the vessel put about on the starboard tack.

"Get to the main sheet!" he yelled; and as poor Steve looked bewildered the Welshman, both of his eyes blackened, swung hard on the backstop's ribs. Utterly cowed, Big Steve rushed inside the forecabin and pulled desperately at the covers on his bunk.

Mr. Bunts, assigned to pick rust off the anchor-chain, fared better, having attached several of the crew by giving them plugs of very good chewing tobacco, a luxury to which he had long been ad-

dicted. As the mate sang out his unintelligible order to "Stand by!" Dan was tipped off; and skipping to the waist of the Melrose he did his part in hauling away. His blood boiled when he saw both mate and captain take a wallop at the National League's grandest pegger as he emerged from the forecastle and reported that he could not find any sheets. But leftfielder Bunts had no stomach for the butt-end of a revolver. His pate was still sore from the night's bickering.

The weather becoming thick, balloon jib, upper jib and the three topsails came down. Short tacks required constant pulling of the ropes. Messrs. Doyle and Bunts, accustomed to Lucullian meals at the best hotels, were nigh faint from hunger. The schooner, buffeted with heavier seas, dipped and rose, canted and righted, with sickening irregularity. Big Steve, polishing some bright metal, lost his footing, plumped an elbow through one of the cabin skylights, and for his awkwardness received another blow on the chin.

"Send the idiot forward, Mr. Evans," bade the



shipmaster. "He'll fall against one of the masts d'rectly and snap it off."

"Dan!" groaned Steve, as he staggered to the windlass on the forecastle deck.

"Wha's matter now, Steve?"

"I fell through a window back there above the parlor; and say, Dan, I heard a woman scream—on the level!"

"Nix!" grunted the outfielder. "No woman'd ever come to a place like this. It was a poll-parrot, Steve. I've read how they always have 'em on ships."

"Take it from me," warmly returned catcher Doyle, who prided himself on his omniscience of the gentler sex, "it was a woman——"

"Silence, you swabs! No talkin' while you're on watch; don't forget that!" Mate Evans had followed Steve forward. He was nearly as perplexed over the situation as the ballplayers. Why did not Captain Ross put them in irons? Even though some mistake had been made, it was a clean case of mutiny. For himself, he had never heard of America's national pastime. The skipper

vouchsafed no information and his grim enjoyment every time he muttered the word "ballplayers" puzzled the executive officer of the Melrose.

"Dan," murmured Steve, as the mate disappeared, "this is a pirate ship. They got a woman locked in the parlor back there. We're in for it, Dan. Ain't this somethin' fierce?"

A long silence followed as Bunts and Doyle chipped rust off the anchor-chain. Each knew what the other was thinking. About this time—nearly noon—the Pioneers would be chatting in the lobby of the Copley Square Hotel, waiting for the dining room to open. They could see the colored head waiter bowing and grinning as the world's champions filed in to their choice of rich, nutritious soups, meats and dessert.

"Dan," said Steve in a hollow voice, "I don't think I'm long f'r this world. There's something coming over me—like—I don't know what. Dan, if I die, you tell 'em——"

"Cut it out, Steve. You don't feel any worse'n I do." Dan grabbed the windlass, for he, too, was experiencing seasickness for the first time. "But"

—he gritted his teeth—“I’m going to put one over on ’em yet.” He looked warily to the quarterdeck, where captain and mate were squinting through their sextants preparatory to “shooting the sun,” and whispered excitedly: “All we have to do is cop ’em, Steve. Look there!” He pointed to several vessels passing at close range. “We c’n make these dingey’s row us over. F’r your own sake, Steve, brace up! Come on—they’re not lookin’. Nothing but a fast ball—now, mind you—and put everything you got on it. It’s our last chance, Steve. We’ll be blacklisted in th’ big leagues!”

It is a celebrated thought of Socrates that if all the misfortunes of mankind were cast into a public stock, in order to be equally divided among the whole species, those who now think themselves the most unhappy would prefer the share they are already possessed of before that which would befall them by such a division. So it was with Big Steve Doyle, who could at that moment imagine no one so miserable as himself. Yet, five minutes after he and leftfielder Bunts had craftily made

their way inside the forecastle and secured, each, two slightly tarnished baseballs from Bunts' suitcase, you could not have looked upon a more elated human being than catcher Doyle.

Absorbed in their nautical observation—for "Old Jamaica" was flirting with the clouds, now bright, now obscured—Captain Ross and Mate Evans had no warning as the two ballplayers stealthily approached within twenty feet, one on each side of the mainmast.

"Now!" shouted Bunts; and with the very word he hurled a fast ball that caught Mate Evans so squarely on the chin that he dropped in his tracks and lay as though never to move again. Catcher Doyle, though a famously accurate thrower, in his weakened state did not trust to so narrow an aim. Picking out the skipper's watch charm, that marked the region of his solar plexus, he drew back for a fragment of time and then let go with his well-known flat-footed peg that had killed off the fleetest of base-stealers. A cannon ball could not have done better service. The master of the Melrose doubled up like a splintered mast and

groveled upon the deck, his face contorted in his agony.

With a wild Irish yell, Steve Doyle precipitated himself upon the Scotch shipmaster, his Celtic blood tingling with victory as he manhandled the skipper and trussed him up with a length of rope, shouting, as he worked, what dire punishment he intended to mete out. Dan Bunts, ever on the alert, spied the Chinese cook running aft, with a long knife upraised, and methodically fitted the second ball in his right hand. As a pitcher, his genius lay in control, putting the pill where he wanted to. The untutored Celestial saw the horsehide whizzing toward him and kept ducking away, but with diabolical sureness the strange missile continued darting for his face. When it landed solidly Mr. Bunts turned unconcernedly to the task of tying up the mate and frisking him of his pistol. Often before he had witnessed the effect of that "bean ball."

Big Steve, utterly jubilant, began to roar forth:

"Has anybody here seen Kelly?

K—E—double L—Y."

Bunts had just lent his tenor accompaniment when, above their pæan, above the lashing of waves, creak of blocking, slatting of canvas and clamor of crew, there sounded a feminine voice, trembling but clear:

"Remember, I can shoot—and shoot straight!"

At the cabin companionway leaned a young woman, holding a small-caliber pistol, which wobbled pitifully, belying the brave words. Her blonde hair was disheveled, dark circles flanked her eyes and the pallor of her face was exaggerated by the sea-mist.

Doyle's jaw relaxed, but his hand still pinioned the skipper's throat. He gave Dan an I-told-you-so look.

"You must not kill him!" she exclaimed, with a defiant sob. "He's my uncle."

"Excuse me, miss," vindicated Steve; "but that's what he nearly done to us. All we asked for was——"

"Why, it's Mr. Doyle—Steve Doyle!" The girl's eyes widened with astonished relief, her bosom heaved with a big intake of breath and her lips

half smiled. "Mr. Bunts, too—of the Pioneers!"

Steve and Dan could only nod, gaping assent.

"Then," cried the mysterious person ere she gracefully collapsed and swooned, "Barney got the telegram, after all!"

Though no benedick, Big Steve had a way with women, and Mr. Bunts tacitly assigned to him the delicate task of carrying the girl below to the cabin while he, in possession of both pistols, did a man's duty on deck.

"Come hither, pickanins!" He summoned the crew with a stern smile. "See that?" He pointed to a small patch near the throat of the main top-sail. In his baseball travels Dan had devoted many an hour to shooting-gallery practice. So, with the briefest of sight, he put a bullet through the target.

"Well; understand?" He stared at the second mate. "I'm handlin' this team now; an' you kids jump th' hurdles or I'll spot the ace on y'r wish-bone!"

Meanwhile Mr. Doyle listened attentively to Miss Gretta Ross, niece of the skipper, as she told of her secret marriage to Barney McNabb, manager of the Pioneers, twice world's champions and now striving for a third "rag." The girl was semi-hysterical and skipped from one disjointed sentence to another so jerkily that Steve had difficulty in following.

She had lived most of her life in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Manager McNabb's native town. Her parents had died and Uncle John had taken care of her. Captain Ross, an un-Americanized Scotchman, for some reason had taken a violent dislike to baseball players, especially to one McNabb. He considered the profession irreligious, unreliable, given to poolplaying and gambling. It was of no consequence that Barney McNabb, baseball manager, earned in a year four times more than John Ross, shipmaster.

"Everybody in New Bedford likes Barney," declared Miss Ross, dabbing a tiny handkerchief to her streaming eyes.

"Sure!" said Steve, wondering what explana-



tion he could make to the Pioneers' manager for his absence.

"Everybody wanted to see us married except Uncle John," continued the unhappy young wife. "He's so terribly religious, you know."

Catcher Doyle rubbed a prodigious bump on the side of his head and unconsciously gave vent to a doubting snort.

"It was when the Pioneers played that exhibition game at Rocky Point, below Providence—don't you remember?"

"I got a homer that day," Mr. Doyle modestly reminded her.

"Yes; yes, it was grand; and Mr. Bunts was fine, too."

"Three singles and a triple." Steve emphasized the gallant record to counterbalance the remarks of leftfielder Bunts, whose voice—berating Captain Ross and demanding food from the cook—penetrated the cabin.

Mrs. McNabb did not seem to hear it, so wrapped up was she in her own narrative.

"Well, it was the next morning that Barney and

I went to Boston and got married. We were so afraid the papers would find it out. Barney wanted to keep it quiet until the season was over. Uncle John, you know, might have been violent."

"It's in him," agreed Mr. Doyle firmly.

"Yes; and when he asked me to make a short trip with him in the old Melrose down to Charleston I thought it would be a good way to—to——"

Young Mrs. McNabb paused at the uncommon sounds on the deck, where leftfielder Bunts had organized a non-volunteer bucket brigade. He was sousing the skipper and mate with pails of cold salt water. Captain Ross' protests and pleadings should have drawn sympathy from any woman, much more a relative; but his niece pressed her lips together and tried to control her voice.

"Oh, but just think, Mr. Doyle!" She gestured dramatically. "If I hadn't looked in the marine news this morning—I mean yesterday morning; you see, I'm so rattled I can't think right. I haven't eaten a bite in hours——"

"You've got nothing on me," Mr. Doyle thought it proper to interpolate.

"Why, I'd never known we were going to South America instead of to Charleston. Could you believe that your own uncle would tell such a story? Wanted to get me away from Barney, you see!"

"Well, f'r me," declared catcher Doyle, "I wouldn't put anything by that old——" He halted, with an apologetic wave.

"We had a terrible scene. I told uncle all about it—how we were married and everything. That's when I telegraphed Barney. But why"—she turned, querulously indignant—"didn't he come himself?"

Catcher Doyle, despite his wounds and his hunger, had been thinking swiftly, as though handling a ninth inning, with one out, the bases full and the home club one run ahead.

"Miss—er—Mrs. McNabb," he said, slowly and solemnly, "Barney couldn't make head or tail out of that telegram."

"Heavens knows what I wrote!" admitted Mrs. McNabb. "I should have told him to come to the hotel; but you see my clothes were on board here—and who—who"—she appealed—"would ever

suppose one's own uncle could be so heartless? He locked me in that room!"

It was real tragedy, acted by a real Bernhardt. Catcher Doyle inwardly commented that Barney McNabb's wife had plenty of ginger.

"We saw you lookin' out the window," lied Steve buoyantly. "And I said: 'Dan, there's something doing here or Miss Ross'd be outside lookin' for Barney.' You see, Barney didn't tell us you were married—just that you were fiancéed."

Mrs. McNabb smiled with sly fondness.

"Of course," assured Steve, "if Barney had figured anything like this was coming off he'd 'a' been here himself, though he was terribly busy——"

"Barney would have killed Uncle John!" interrupted the niece passionately.

"Well," said Steve doubtfully, "he'd 'a' had some battle. Soon as we told him we were ballplayers, him an' that red-mustached guy an' the whole team jumped on us for fair—tried t' beat us t' death!"

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry!" exclaimed the mariner's niece. "Isn't it the strangest thing, Mr. Doyle, how he hates baseball men?"

"Mrs. McNabb," informed Steve gravely, "you'd be surprised how many uneducated people there are. I seen a man once who didn't know what the hit-and-run was, never had been inside a big league park; an' yet they told me he was a professor in some college!"

There was a commotion on deck, loud orders delivered in Portuguese, a running of many footsteps and a turn in the vessel's course.

"Steve!" yelled Bunts down the companionway. "We've put on the brakes an' we're going to get off. Get a wiggle on you. Hurry up! Come on! Hurry!"

In response to the shouts and wigwagging of Bunts, a small tug about a quarter of a mile to starboard had come to a dead stop and was now bobbing up and down in the choppy sea. Amidships, the crew of the Melrose, having thrown the schooner into the wind, were lowering a gig, unheeding the remonstrances of Captain Ross, who for once found his pet oath inadequate.

Catcher Doyle bounced out on deck.

"She's going along, too, Dan—Barney McNabb's wife!"

"Hey, Steve!" chided Dan. "You sure this is on the level? You know you're always fallin' f'r women in trouble. How d'you know but what it's a plant?"

"Forget it!" Steve replied with deliberate certainty. "She's a big leaguer an' on the level. An' just think, Dan, what Barney'll say when we bring his wife back!"

"That's just what I am a-thinkin'," Bunts retorted significantly.

"I'm a son of a gun if you ain't going batty!" snorted Steve, his anger rising. "That gal goes or I don't go."

Halting a moment to abuse the struggling captain and mate, Steve ran to the forecastle, arrayed himself in his own clothes, then relieved Mr. Bunts, who felt in better humor on finding his money safe. Whatever doubts Dan had as to the fair captive's identity were removed when she appeared on deck and endured the verbal assault of her uncle.

"That'll be about all f'r you!"—Big Steve cut it

short—"you old billy-goat! You ought t' be ashamed o' yourself going round th' country parting husbands from their wives. An' don't you ever come in a park where I'm playing; b'cause I'll get you if I got t' pull you off the grandstand itself!"

Leftfielder Bunts was the last to descend the shaky rope-ladder, but upon arriving at the tug, whose destination was Baltimore, he was the first to get aboard. When he explained the exigency of the "captain's daughter" being hurried to a hospital, at the same time slipping over a fifty-dollar bill, few words passed before the bell sounded for "full speed ahead!"

In New York, Messrs. Doyle and Bunts occupied several hours to great advantage at a Turkish bath, where hero-worshiping rubbers erased all signs of the recent conflict and so loosened up their joints that, upon arriving in Boston, leftfielder and catcher felt in prime shape. The team had already left for the park, but Steve and Dan donned spangles and went out in a taxicab, meekly taking a seat at the far end of the bench. McNabb grilled them with one outraged look and then turned his atten-

tion to the game, which was being tossed away. Savagely twisting a scorecard with which he now and then gave signals, McNabb kept silent as the battle raged against him for seven innings; but when the college catcher let in a run on a passed ball, and the newly-bought bush leaguer failed to double up a man at the plate on a short drive to left field, he flooded Doyle and Bunts with insulting satire. Backstop and fielder wilted at first, but the tirade became so obnoxious, the sneers of teammates so unbearable, that Catcher Doyle rushed over, put his hands against the manager's ears and bellowed ominously at him:

"Mrs. Barney McNabb's down at the Copley Square Hotel nearly dead. Did you get that? Me and Dan Bunts saved her life! Did you get that?"

It was evident that the Pioneers' manager "got" something, as his long legs scuttled over the green and through a grandstand aisle.

The C. N. D. operator in the press stand, on ticker service, cut the news down to the bone. He merely flashed: "Doyle now catching: Bunts in left



field." But the special correspondent with the Pioneers elaborated and his sporting editor wired back: "Find out what's happened. Send good story for sporting edition. Rumor here that Doyle and Bunts did not accompany team to Boston."

At nine o'clock that night the correspondent was still unenlightened, for Doyle and Bunts were immured in their room. Though gorged upon planked steak and puffing good cigars, they were uneasy; and when summoned to the manager's apartment they buttoned and unbuttoned their coats, smoothed their hair and adjusted their neckties—fidgety, like timid witnesses approaching the stand.

McNabb's face was drawn with anxiety and he evaded the apprehensive looks of his two stars. Some mental tragedy seemed to affect his physical control. He upset a chair and knocked Steve's hat off the table. Balancing himself on the edge of the sofa he finally blurted:

"Steve—and you, Dan—you're good friends o' mine, ain't you?"

The answer was loud and impulsive:

"You know it, Mac!"

The manager wet his dry lips and reaching out grabbed a hand of each.

"Boys," he said earnestly, "I c'n never thank you for what you've done."

Steve and Dan gestured disclaimingly.

"The wife's pretty sick," apologized Barney, "or she'd thank you too. I got a doctor in there now. But, boys," and his eyes were again guiltily evasive, "sick as she is she's sore on me for not goin' after her myself. She thinks—she's got the idea that I sent you fellows!"

Doyle and Bunts looked astonished.

"And, Steve an' Dan," begged McNabb, turning his gaze frankly upon them, "that's what I wanted t' see you about. For Heaven's sake, don't tell her anything different, will you?"

Doyle and Bunts laughed curiously. McNabb held up a hand for silence.

"Truth is, boys, I never opened that telegram. I thought it was from Thomson, over in Philadelphia. I'd had him on the long distance about that kid, Harris, the southpaw I'm after, and Thomson said he'd wired me. I supposed it was from him

an' I left it layin' in my room—maybe in the waste-basket, for all I know. But I daren't tell her that. Women," he explained mournfully, "are so darned queer!"

Big Steve nodded understandingly. "Mac," he pledged, "it'll never go any further than us, y' can bet a season's salary!" Bunts supplemented strongly.

There was a minute of freighted silence.

"I don't know, boys," ventured McNabb tactfully, "but what it might be just as well f'r me to have the facts. Un'erstand? Just in case she ever did bring it up, you know." There was forgiveness in his voice.

Leftfielder Bunts cleared his throat.

"Mac," he admitted accusingly, "there's no credit comin' to me. Give it all to Big Steve. I was for going to a vaudeville show; we didn't want to hang around fanning and maybe have a couple o' drinks. Y' un'erstand? Big Steve says we go down and see a battleship, just to pass away th' time. Well, that was a pretty lucky thing for you, Mac." Bunts was convincing. "We was coming up to the Bos-

ton boat, when all of a sudden Steve pipes off the lady.

"‘Dan,’ he says, grabbing me like that!" Mr. Bunts illustrated on the manager's shoulder—"‘if that ain't Barney's girl I'll never wear a mask again!' He'd seen her that day we played at Rocky Point."

"Bumper Williams pointed her out," verified Steve.

"Just like him!" censured McNabb, smiting his knee, his eyes alight with the bizarre narrative. "The old noser! Lives just down the street from the wife."

"So there was nothing for Steve but to follow along," recounted Bunts. "Got t' give it to the big fella, Mac. I was for gettin' to the steamer. 'Fraid we'd miss it. But Steve kept sayin': 'That's McNabb's girl and there's something ain't right about this!' "

"Looked to me," put in Steve judiciously, "as if that old pirate was draggin' her along—against her will, you know!"

Manager McNabb cast a glance of gratitude at

his devoted backstop. Mr. Doyle bowed his head as though overcome.

"Well," affirmed Mr. Bunts; "not much more to tell, Mac. We went on board, told th' captain who we was an' asked to see the lady, same as if she was any friend's wife in trouble. Y' un'erstand? A Christian, wasn't he"—Bunts turned to Doyle—"that old battler?"

"Battler, all right!" Steve ejaculated, with emphasis.

"Took us into th' kitchen, nice as you please, and then"—Bunts leaped from his chair, the ring of sincerity in his voice—"all of a sudden him and his whole bunch of dingeys pounded us into jelly!"

Mr. Doyle, inspired by fresh memories, joined in the dramatic recital.

McNabb sat amazed and enthralled. "That's one for the book," was all he could say. "One for the book. Nobody'd ever believe it!"

As they reached the climax Manager McNabb also rose to a point of fury.

"And that sneakin' secretary," he exclaimed,

"was trying to tell me that you boys were on a jag!"

"What!" roared the heroes. "An' you stood for it, Mac?"

"No!" denied McNabb. "No, I didn't—the blankety-blank nickel-squeezer! I'll show him who's running this club! I'll make out the contracts for next season." His glance was pregnant with promise. "I told him you might 'a' been held up or something, but I knew you'd never throw me down——"

A woman's querulous voice came from the other room.

"Good night, boys!" finished McNabb softly. His grasp was fervent.

"G' night, Mac."

## THE RINGER

**A**BOUT three weeks before the Pioneers started South on their training trip Manager Barney McNabb instructed outfielder Dan Bunts and catcher Steve—Big Steve—Doyle secretly to take up quarters in the diminutive village of Atwater, South Carolina, for the single purpose of discovering whether Mr. Bunts could “come back” as a star pitcher in fast company, a position in which he had been eminent until spit-ball-throwing weakened his wrist, compelling him to play left field. The enterprise meant much to McNabb. If Bunts could acquire an underhand or sidearm-raise ball, to mix, in his masterly fashion, with other “hooks” and “smoke,” then McNabb could afford to trade his ten-thousand-dollar youngster, Gifford, who in two years’ opportunity had not made good. Manager Nichols of the Prunes, nevertheless, had vast confidence in this expensive

fellow, and was willing to give six thousand dollars and a shortstop for him. It was one judgment against another; but McNabb reckoned that he would far overreach his rival, provided solely that Bunts recovered his old-time form. The deal was open until March first, and muteness was the watchword enjoined by the Pioneers' general as Dan and Big Steve swung on the train at Pittsburgh.

"Play it safe, now!" ordered McNabb. "Don't let anybody know who you are. Nichols thinks he's going to weaken my pitching staff and put us out of the race. I c'n take that six thousand bucks an' buy Shadow Metzgar. He's got another good year in him; and with him f'r southpaw an' Dan back we'll have the swellest bunch of moundsmen in th' league. Besides, I want that shortstop. Hecker's ankle's gone back on him—busted it playin' handball. This kid of Nichols' is a wonder, an' I'm going t' start him right away. Everything on the q. t., now, boys. If Nichols gets wise to this he'll call the deal off. You come through and there'll be a bonus f'r both o' you in October." A last glimpse of the Pioneers' manager showed



him standing with a mutilated forefinger pressed to his lips, his heavy eyebrows in a warning pucker.

Messrs. Doyle and Bunts conducted themselves warily, eschewing all advances from fellow passengers; and, on changing trains at St. Charles, twenty miles from their destination, they sidled unobtrusively into the rear seat of the day coach. Their suitcases, among similar impedimenta belonging to a party of young men and women, were piled in the forward part of the car and the watchful Bunts after a while took a turn up and down the aisle to make sure no one had appropriated his parcel, which was recently bought and of excellent make. The initials "D.B.," executed boldly, reassured him.

"Seems t' me, Steve," he confided, "that I've run across that lad somewhere—one with th' sandy hair."

"Stranger t' me," returned Doyle. "He ain't in the big leagues—swear to that. But, say, Dan, pipe the dame—black-haired one; some class there, eh?"

Dan frowned. "Same old stuff, huh? You want

t' cut that out. No mixin' up. 'Member what Barney said."

Mr. Doyle accepted the rebuke meekly, but did not remove his audacious eye from the company of five, whose tailoring indicated wealth and good taste. Big Steve, far famed as a shrewd and self-possessed catcher, was no ordinary observer of lights and shadows, circumstances, causes and effects. He concluded that the tall, freckle-faced young man, of cheerful and guileless countenance, though with the company, was not exactly one of them. The attention the young man received from the lady of the raven tresses was plainly displeasing to the stern, longish-faced man, who occasionally smiled sourly as he replied to a question, but for the most part gazed out the window. The plump, blonde girl prattled incessantly to him and to the stolid, well-set-up gentleman, who so sedulously caressed, curried and coaxed his long, drooping mustachios that Steve found himself imitating the movements. Doyle's final conclusion, as the conductor announced "Atwater! All out!" was that the brunette really wanted to "sign" with the

sandy-haired youth and that she was not using the blonde "for a stall."

The party of five alighted first, sorting out their luggage, and stepped into a purple mammoth of a touring car, whose speed tallied with its size. Dan and Steve, learning that the hotel was "jes' up yonder," put their baggage on a tottering spring-wagon and walked, glad indeed to stretch their cramped muscles. A red February sun was dropping behind the distant hills. From far and wide one could whiff the rancid odor of frying bacon. Across the fields, from a low, shingled veranda, came the twang of a banjo; and presently a treble voice of strangely yearning flavor set up:

There'll be no dark places when Jesus comes,  
There'll be no dark places when Jesus comes,  
There'll be no dark places when Jesus comes,  
To carry his loved ones home.

All about was the redolence of Southern spring-time; and as they neared the hotel a hot breath of air, with its presage of warm weather, kissed the cheeks of Barney McNabb's two illustrious employees. Steve took a deep inhalation and squared his massive shoulders. "Peach of a place t' train,

Dan!" he said eagerly to his friend. "I c'n see the Big Swede fannin' already on that sidearm-raise of yours."

Clerk Heinze, redhaired, long-nosed, rubbed his hands in relish and his porcelain eyes twinkled as he witnessed the approach of two substantial guests. Atwater was far from the beaten track of Northern tourist invasion—its hotel a frame structure consisting mostly of veranda; but Clerk Heinze assumed all the airs of a metropolitan host as he directed the negro help, welcomed the strangers and, with a flourish, displayed the register, simultaneously holding out the inked pen.

The matter of selecting assumed names had occupied a considerable part of the ballplayers' journey and it was Mr. Bunts who thought of the simple but adequate aliases: "J. Stevens" and "J. Daniels." While engaged in the labor of transcribing these, Doyle took occasion to enlighten the clerk that Mr. Daniels had come South on account of ill health. "Un'erstan'," he said; "particular friend o' mine; and I'm, as you might say, trainin' him."

The clerk had just begun to extol the climate when Mr. Bunts gave a startled cry. His athletic figure had a dramatic pose; his mouth hung open; his eyes were wide.

"Steve! Steve! Hey, Steve!"

Catcher Doyle was there with one bound; and as he looked from Dan to the clerk his amazement heightened, for there on the opposite page of the register, of a date one week prior, plain as could be, was the signature: "Daniel Bunts, Cincinnati."

Luxuriating for a full minute as one who represses a choice morsel of gossip, Clerk Heinze grinned covertly and then winked. "Ah, ha! gentlemen; I see you are baseball fans. Know who it is, eh? Well, you're right. Not much of a place, this, but we get them from all over. Yep, that's the genuine article—Dan Bunts, of the Pioneers. H-s-h-t! Here he comes now!"

There was a flash of white flannel suit, topped by a freckled face, as the sandy-haired youth of the train passed into the dining room.

"Long as you're going to be here a while," went on the clerk, "I might as well tell you, gentlemen,

that he don't care about having it known. Understand—he's down here ahead of the Pioneers, getting in condition. Pitches every day out on the field there. I'll introduce him to you. Sweller fellow y' never met. Just something—he don't want th' newspapers to get on to it. Ought t' see him pitch! Holy Christmas! maybe he can't sting 'em in! Be a good thing f'r you to exercise with him," the clerk volunteered to Dan. "D'you two gentlemen ever play ball?"

Bunts, still hypnotized by the familiar name, only gulped.

"Why, uh, yes," Steve answered vaguely. "We figured on doin' a little o' that ourselves. My friend, y' see, is goin' to college next fall, an' he wants——"

"Come on," broke in Dan; "let's get to our room." His eye blazed, his fists were clenched.

The door had hardly closed on the negro porter when outfielder Bunts, by way of commanding attention, drove his fist into catcher Doyle's kidneys with impetus enough to have disabled an ordinary human being for several days.

"What'd I tell yuh! Didn't I say I seen that lad somewhere! It must 'a' been in Newell's Café, in Pittsburgh, where Barney was talkin' to us. Nichols is on to us an' he's sent this man t' shadow me. He's a detective er something." And then, with another body blow: "But what's he taken my name for, heh? I say, what's he call hisself Bunts for?"

Catcher Doyle, with admirable nicety, parted his hair with a wetted comb.

"I'm no Sherlock Holmes," he confessed. "All I know is that I wants eats and I wants 'em quick."

"Steve," declared Dan, "what we'll do is to beat it out of here on the first train tomorrow."

Big Steve set his elbows akimbo and thrust out his jaw. "I didn't think that of you," he said. And then, tauntingly: "Well, if you can't take care of him I can; and we're going to stay right in Atwater. If this guy comes gumshoeing round where we work I'll——" Steve, catching the fragrance of fried ham, did not finish his threat.

The pretender gave not a look at his fellow guests. In high good humor he bandied jests with

the waitress and the clerk. Even upon leaving the table he ignored his quarry.

"Foxy, all right," growled Bunts. "If he ever breaks into the league there'll be a good one for the book, take my oath."

"Fresh, all right," proclaimed Mr. Doyle, whose overtures toward the waitress met no response.

Clerk Heinze, strolling from office to dining room, tried to ingratiate himself and learn more of the newcomers, but had little success. Marveling at the dexterity with which the invalid, Daniels, cleared his plate he remarked:

"You're getting well fast."

"Change of climate," explained Mr. Doyle curtly, rapping for more corncakes.

Heinze reëntered the office and it was thence that the ballplayers presently heard hot words, accusings, denials, mention of "suitcase," "train," "mistake." Some typically real American epithets followed; and then, in a twinkling, sounded the smack of a blow, the capsizing of chairs, breaking of furniture.

Messrs. Doyle and Bunts methodically com-



pleted their meal; methodically fished out a dime each, the prescribed big league tip; methodically cut the ends off cigars and then, with somewhat quickened motion, strode toward the pit of altercation.

Gathered at the doorways they saw half a dozen villagers; back of them the ebony faces of the negro help, for all the world like the white and black stops of an organ. Clerk Heinze was dancing about, imploring this one and that to help him stop the fight. Squared off in the center of the room, the contestant—namely, the pretender Bunts and the glum-visaged man of the train—were sparing for time. Both were livid with passion, convulsed evidently by some extraordinary feeling.

“Help! Help!” screamed Heinze, tugging at Big Steve, who was regarding the fray with a professional eye. He had not hoped for such pleasant after-dinner entertainment.

Steve blew a full mouthful of smoke and leaned against the desk. “Not on your life,” he declined. “Never butt in on anybody else’s fun.”

Bunts was not so calm. His own hands itching,



"KNEE HIM—GIVE HIM TH' KNEE," BURST FORTH DAN. Page 111

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he encouraged the pretender's opponent with gestures and underbreath advice: "Cross him now—uppercut—block that—hit f'r th' kidneys!"

Though evenly matched in height and reach, it soon became apparent that the sandy-haired youth would prevail. He did not exert his full strength until his antagonist, between breaths, maligned him unmercifully, denouncing him as a "blackguard" and "thief." His face and neck scarlet, the young man then, with a swift rush, hurled his opponent across the room and landed a neat blow flush on his right eye. He fell over a chair and his head struck a stone spittoon with an ugly thud.

"Knee him—give him th' knee!" burst forth Dan.

"Shut up!" snarled Steve; and seizing his teammate by the arm he led him to the veranda.

"He calls hisself Bunts!" muttered Dan. "An' one good wallop ought t' done the trick."

The defeated was in a sorry plight—semi-conscious and blood streaming from his temple. While Clerk Heinze hovered over him, the victor, his voice ringing with boyish honesty, cried out:

"Accused me of stealing her suitcase! Me—stealing—me!" There were tears of mortification and anger on his cheeks. "Why, I never stole in my life!" He held his hand aloft in appeal. "What would I steal for!" The appeal was received indifferently by the onlookers, who were dwindling away.

There is always something inexpressibly forlorn about an unjustly accused person who cannot clear himself. He tells his story, reiterates, asks his friends to pass it along. Waking or sleeping, his mind is centered there. Always there is the doubt whether he has been convincing or not. Even an acquittal by jury does not free him from this horrid burden, though it be only imagined. So it was that young Mr. Garrison Caruthers, after one more protestation of innocence, flung himself out of the door and began to tramp mile after mile over the sandy roads, as unhappy a scion of wealth and good family as one could find in a month's journey.

The present predicament was partly his own fault, partly that of his father, the Honorable Endicott Caruthers, president of the Mutual Consolidated

Trust Company, director in fifty corporations and a financier of international repute. As third vice-president of the Mutual, Caruthers, Jr., had been selected for the "goat" when that concern got into difficulties with the Federal authorities. If there were an investigation the officers, including his father, feared that he would make a very indifferent witness, to say the least. A bigger-hearted, better-natured student had never been graduated from Harvard. Nor, in all its history, had the university turned out so skillful a baseball pitcher. But "Slats," as he was known because of his tallness and angularity, had not developed, in his three years' ex-college experience, notable aptness for finance.

"If you had paid more attention to the office and less to baseball," rebuked Caruthers, Sr., as he shipped his son to Atwater, South Carolina, "you would not bring this possible humiliation upon the family. As it is, I cannot blame our people. The whole investigation will pivot upon your department."

A father's love shone in the eyes of Caruthers,

Sr., and he was about to add some softening words; but "Slats" took on such an expression of relief and pleasant anticipation that the old man concluded scowlingly:

"Now, for your own sake, don't make an ass of yourself! You must sink your identity—take another name. You must not even communicate with your mother or Evelyn. Keep in touch with me only. I have hopes that the scare will blow over. But under no condition must you appear until I give the word."

Caruthers, Jr., scarcely heard the admonition. Already he fancied himself in the balmy climate of Dixie, toying with a horsehide-covered baseball and exercising himself into perfect condition. Perhaps there might be an opportunity to try his skill in a real game! Away with musty finance and the cares of third vice-president! "Slats" was once more a sophomore.

Unlike the two professional players, Bunts and Doyle, the collegian gave no thought to the detail of taking an alias. Hesitating as he held the inked pen before the hotel register, the name of Daniel

Bunts, of whom he had been reading in sporting pages on the way down, recurred to "Slats;" in fact it pleased his fancy, and without a serious thought of possible consequences he filched the identity of Barney McNabb's illustrious hireling.

The homage he received from Clerk Heinze amused "Slats." It added to the romance of the expedition. After a couple of hours' work-out with some of the village boys he would run back to the hotel, sweating and bright-eyed, skip under the shower and laugh loud and long. It would be a corking story to narrate at the Harvard Club. Even Caruthers, Sr., would relish the adventure.

It was not until the third day of his sojourn that the college hero had some misgivings about his wisdom in posing as a professional ballplayer. Clerk Heinze, though pledged to secrecy, had not been entirely discreet; and, having acquainted Caruthers of the history of the Brewster family, he likewise informed their butler, Haggerty, that Atwater was entertaining a celebrity. Miss Dorothy Brewster was immediately interested, and it was her touring car that halted by the ballfield just



when Caruthers, thoroughly warmed up, was hurling his finest brand of shoots to his earnest but inefficient catcher.

"Slats," or, as he was also known to his many friends, "Garry," Caruthers had had a close look at Miss Brewster in the village post-office that very morning; and so profoundly, if one may use this adverb to describe a young man's fancy in spring-time, was he disturbed that he was of half a mind to declare his real name and seek an introduction. From assurances of Clerk Heinze, who had a pretty intimate knowledge of all local situations, political and sentimental, "Slats" believed that the lady was engaged to neither Mr. Lucius Bolton nor the other visitor, Lord Hemmingway. He longed intensely to be "in the running," but concluded that, under the guise of a professional ballplayer, this desideratum was out of the question.

You may be sure then that Garry's heart jumped and his eyes danced when he saw the beauteous Miss Brewster dispatching Bolton on an errand, the purpose of which could be none other than to summon the athlete over to the car. Bolton did

not appear to enjoy the task, picking his way slowly through the sand toward the pitcher's box, where "Slats" was going through some extra convolutions. Bolton had used every argument to dissuade Dorothy, but the imperious young woman had insisted; and her friend, little Miss Dearing—she of the blonde hair and polite prattle—had, of course, sustained her.

"Bit of a lark, I say," was Lord Hemmingway's opinion. "He looks to me a jolly agreeable chap."

"Rats!" sulked Bolton. "You don't understand. He's not a cricket player. These men are hired athletes, professionals, on the same plane as pugilists. If he meets Miss Brewster he'd likely brag about it to his friends, and that sort of thing."

"Nonsense!" Miss Brewster maintained. "I was in a dining car once with one of the clubs and they seemed to be very much like other men. Only"—she shrugged her shoulders teasingly—"rather more interesting. They're heroes in our country, y'know, Lord Hemmingway."

"Quite so," returned the Englishman. "'Twould be a diversion I say—what?"

"Oh, all right!" agreed Bolton petulantly. "I'll get him." But he darted a vengeful look at Hemmingway, who was not perturbed.

Bolton, after years of acquaintance with Dorothy and her father, the wealthy dyspeptic savant, who enjoyed better health in his South Carolina home than elsewhere, had come to regard himself as the logical claimant for Miss Brewster's hand. A successful lawyer of singular concentration, he had complete charge of Mr. Brewster's large business affairs; and he availed himself of this fact to see a great deal of the talented daughter and heiress, even accompanying them on several of their trips abroad. It was at Florence, the preceding autumn, that they had met Lord Hemmingway, traveler and soldier, who so entertained Dorothy with his narrative of queer adventures that Bolton had come to estimate him as his foremost rival and not a mere benchwarmer, as he appeared to be when first introduced.

Narrowly watching both Dorothy and the Englishman, Bolton gave even more heed to the attitude and expression of the philosophizing father,

because in the capacity of legal adviser he knew something of Mr. Brewster's notions as to his daughter's prospective husband. They were pronounced and unusual. Contrasted with those of the ordinary millionaire, for example, he did not care a rap whether Dorothy married a man of wealth. He was not even greatly concerned in the matter of family, pointing out numerous examples of men who had risen to distinction despite early drawbacks—such men as Cromwell, Jeremy Taylor and Lincoln.

"Health first," he was wont to tell his daughter in their casual talks. "Health first, stamina and good morals. For myself, I have led the life of a dreamer, hoping to become a Pericles, Plato, Cæsar, Shakespeare, Goethe or Milton. But ill health has prevented my happiness. You have inherited some of my ambition. But I want you and your children to be happy. So, I say, marry a man with perfect health and fine habits. Remember that true beauty is not on the outside. The peach with rotten kernel may have ever so lovely bloom. Beauty is in the bone. If this nation is to be regenerated it

must be, let me speak plainly, through sane breeding. Never mind the excellence of his wit. You have enough for both. Health first, I say. This is my wish, whether I am alive or dead when you make your decision."

In her considerable experience with wooers, sincere and self-seeking, she had held this in mind; and she was slightly diverted by Lucius' zeal in keeping up his tennis practice. The intent was so obvious.

Bolton read her thoughts; and when, after awkwardly making his acquaintance with the supposed Dan Bunts, he presented him to Miss Brewster there was a sharp pang of anxiety and jealousy, the like of which he had never felt.

"Great pleasure, Miss Brewster," said Caruthers easily. "I have noticed you motoring by several times. Are you interested in the national pastime?"

Dorothy's brown eyes opened widely and she smiled exultingly. The professional ballplayer was not at all as Lucius had portrayed him. Leaning an arm on the tonneau, Caruthers wiped the sweat

from his sunburned brow and talked entertainingly of his art. His low-buttoned sweater disclosed a neck unribbed with cords, yet muscular—a classic neck, for “Slats” had rounded out physically since college days. His smallish ears lay close to his head, denoting gameness. His nose was too stubby, his mouth too large. But how clear and honest were those mirthful eyes—how wholesome the skin!

Miss Brewster had a good opportunity to study his hands, for in a moment she touched on that fascinating secret of the game—how to make a ball change its course, out, in or down; and the college expert waxed voluble. When her white, patrician fingers, embracing the soiled sphere, met the freckled, sweaty ones of the ballplayer it was almost more than Bolton could endure. Lord Hemmingway, stroking his mustache at intervals, observed: “Extraordinary!”

As they were leaving, Dorothy said: “Mr. Bunts, won’t you come over some time and give an exhibition for my father? He’s so interested in all these scientific things. I’ll tell you, make it Saturday.

We're giving a little informal lawn party, and you must be the entertainer. I'd love to have you."

Quite unnecessarily she again shook hands, leaving young Mr. Caruthers, of Harvard, with cap in hand and bowing elaborately. Her manner was just as warm when they met the following Friday at St. Charles, where each had been shopping; and catcher Steve Doyle, studying them on the train, was far from astray when he guessed her sentiments toward the sandy-haired youth. Preposterous as it might seem for another of her substance and social status to wed a professional ballplayer, Miss Brewster knew and Bolton feared that, if impulse, reason and fondness dictated, she would not be daunted. Up to then, pitcher Bunts had been a miracle of good behavior.

Perseverance, decision, constancy, character—have you ever heard those words, gentle reader? To be sure, for they have been drummed into the ears of us poor ordinary mortals since preaching began. "Know thyself!" "To thine own self be true!" There are whole libraries of such advice; and yet, if the truth were known, the big leaguers

who wrote it fell by the wayside, many and oft. Some, possibly, got drunk; others may have bought votes, and maybe others thumped their wives if they nagged them. All well and good to talk about controlling circumstances and emotions, but who ever did it! A "boot," fumble or mistaken signal has wrecked the most perfect baseball machine ever organized and lost the game by 1-0 on the home grounds. The strongest mentalities are veered from their course by trifles. How much more capricious a maid of twenty-four!

When Dorothy Brewster reached home she so infected her morose father with her sunshine of spirits that he began to play a gay Mexican waltz. Dorothy, in her boudoir dressing for dinner, tripped eccentric steps to the music, assured her French maid that she intended going on the stage, sang, gossiped, forgot this, mislaid that, wanted her hair done one way, then changed her mind and finally sent Rosa scurrying for the suitcase. Upon opening it, mistress and maid were at first mystified and then Dorothy threw herself on the bed, convulsed with laughter.



"Oh, delicious! Don't you see, Rosa—the initials, D.B.? Mr. Bunts was on the train with us and we've mixed up our suitcases! He must have mine. Good gracious!" She sprang up quickly. "I must send over for it!" And Rosa was bidden to explain things to the faithful Lucius.

Exposed on top of his belongings were various parts of Dan Bunts' uniform, or, as he would have expressed it, "spangles"—long, footless woolen stockings; sleeveless shirt; spiked shoes, and what appeared to be a leather glove in the last stages of decomposition. Dorothy was about to refasten the lid when the edge of a photograph caught her eye and, Evelike, she could not resist the temptation.

It was the portrait of a buxom, saucy-looking girl—attractive enough after a fashion, but not reeking with refinement. Miss Brewster slowly took in every detail and turned to the other side. Three times she read the inscription: "Oh, you big-league kiddo!" The signature was "Peaches."

Now, surely there was nothing in that to disconcert a young woman so gifted and determined; and yet, as she sat before her mirror, all the life

and sparkle seemed to have left Miss Brewster's face. Her father was playing a dulcet classic selection.

"Poor old daddy!" murmured the girl. "A dreamer you are and always will be. One more illusion gone! You see, I couldn't do it, 'kiddo.'" Languidly she concluded dressing.

Lucius, arriving from his encounter with Caruthers, face swollen and lacerated, did not so much stir her indignation as settle her convictions. He reported that "the blackguard had refused to give up the case," and she believed that. On the veranda after dinner she held cracked ice to his brow, sympathized with him and agreed that she had been utterly foolish in demanding the ball-player's acquaintance. She tried to believe that pity was really akin to love, but her voice was harsh when she ordered the butler to bring more ice.

About this time Barney McNabb's two stars, smoking numerous cigars and discussing the pretender Bunts from their mouth corners, were interrupted by Clerk Heinze, who flopped into a chair, limp and distressed.

"Gosh-hangdest night I ever put in!" he exclaimed. "I can't get head or tail of it. Funny, ain't it?"

"If you say so," replied Mr. Doyle, determined to be non-committal.

Heinze went on to give some particulars. "I've been all through Bunts' room; an' if he's got her suitcase he must have hid it somewhere. That would be funny, wouldn't it?"

"If you say so," again from Mr. Doyle.

"But she's got his all right. They opened it— an' there was his uniform and glove and letters, and a girl's photograph—'Peaches,' she signed it. There was——"

"P-peaches!" exploded Mr. Bunts.

"Yeh. Mr. Bolton said that. It was one of the things that made Bunts sores't."

"G-got t' get a drink." Outfielder Bunts jumped up and scuttled away like Ty Cobb turning third.

"What's th' matter with him?" inquired the clerk.

"He gets—er—gets them spells once in a while," Steve stumbled. "Heart, th' doctor says. Got t' have plenty o' water."

"Looks healthy enough," observed Heinze. "I'd say he c'd fight his weight in wildcats."

"Strong, you know; but—er—weak," explained Steve.

"Well," continued Heinze, "I ain't blamin' anybody, but I'd give a five-dollar bill if that baseball player hadn't come here. We get half our trade from the Brewsters; people stop here when their house is full. Sometimes they have fifteen, twenty guests at a time. They'll have the sheriff after Bunts, sure as shootin'! Mr. Bolton said so. Funniest thing I ever seen, isn't it? Beats hen-wrastlin'."

Mr. Doyle, shifting and uneasy, agreed that the latter diversion might be outclassed and abruptly departed.

Hurrying to Dan's room he found that gladiator brandishing a feminine garment of surpassing quality and roaring anathemas at everything and everybody.

"Put it back," said Big Steve, with the delicacy of Sir Galahad. "That girl's real fast company,

Dan, and she'd be sore as a boil if you went through her junk."

"Sore!" flared Bunts. "What about mine? Didn't that goldfish downstairs say they turned it all over—my clothes, my photographs, my letters, probably read 'em!"

"It's y'r own fault," blamed Steve. "Why don't you look after your baggage? What you need is a nurse, not a ketcher. Your own fault!"

Dan subsided, but slowly; one can readily appreciate his feelings. There is hardly anything so mortifying as to have one's traveling effects unfurled. It is like a masquerader coming home under the "broad grin of day."

"But my glove, Steve, my glove!" Bunts resumed in tones of anguish. "It's that fielding glove I broke in two years ago. 'Member? You caught me the day I wore it in Chicago, last game I pitched. I had ten chances—an' got 'em. I been saving it all this time, in case I ever went back to th' rubber!"

Catcher Doyle instantly became solicitous; and well he might. A Cremona to the violinist, an apt

accompanist to the singer, an inspiring model to the artist—that and no less is his pet glove to the ballplayer. Hours, days—yes, weeks—he fashions it; anointing it, rubbing it, trimming here, adding there, until it becomes part of his craft, part of himself. Twisting his hand to any angle, he has confidence that the ball will stick. A strange glove is treacherous, feels out of place, like a man in woman's clothes.

Big Steve pondered over the calamity but a moment, then dropped Miss Brewster's suitcase out of the window.

"You pick it up while I fan with the goldfish," he commanded Bunts. "We got t' get your mitt."

A full moon shone, pine trees cast weird shadows, frogs chirruped their lullaby and an owl hooted dismally as the two ballplayers trudged through the sand uphill toward the Brewster mansion, its veranda aglow with electric lights. When, half-way, a dilapidated buggy passed them, the malodor of a cheap cigar wafting from under the occupant's wide-brimmed slouch hat, Steve exclaimed, "Sheriff," and the pace was quickened.

Arriving, they stood unnoticed while the sheriff talked of "warrant" and "bloodhounds"; and then Steve, ignoring formalities, stepped up.

"Miss Brewster, I guess this is what you're looking for."

Steve's remarkable prescience told him that the least show of mirth would indicate that he had opened the parcel; so he fortified himself with an expression stern as John Knox reprimanding the frivolous Mary, Queen of Scots. Mr. Bunts, taking the cue, exhibited the same inexorable countenance as he walked under the bunch-light.

"Mr. Bu—Daniels," introduced Steve impressively. "I'm Mr. St-Stevens. We're stopping at the hotel. Mr. Daniels is training to go t' college. We——"

"I say, didn't I see you there to-night?" Bolton, his right eye embalmed now in beefsteak, got up from his chair.

"That's what!" Outfielder Bunts assured him artfully. "And you give that fellow as pretty a wallop—cross-counter—as I ever saw."

Bolton's visible eye glowed. "Fell over a chair," he vindicated, "or I'd have got him!"

"Chair's what did it," verified Dan and Steve.

The shadow of Mr. Brewster darkened the doorway. The millionaire philosopher blinked through double-ply spectacles. He extended a hand that felt like smoke in the maws of the big-leaguers.

"They've brought back my bag, father," explained the daughter. Then, turning to Steve: "I'm awfully grateful; but I—I don't quite understand. Where was it? How did you make Mr. Bu—that man—give it to you?"

"Oh, we didn't have a word with him," Steve answered. "The clerk told us about the trouble, and Mr. Daniels and I did a little detective work of our own. We went around th' bases, as you might say; and what d'you suppose? Back of the woodshed—that's where it was!"

"Some nigger stole it," put in Bunts, his soul delighted at his partner's cleverness. "That's what I told St—Mr. Stevens."

"Not a bit of it!" denied Bolton hotly. "Bunts took it and no one else. He knew we'd search his



room. That's his idea of a joke. He's a professional ballplayer. You've probably heard of him—Bunts, of the Pioneers? I begged Miss Brewster not to meet him. This is the result!"

Big Steve straightened his shoulders, his glance threatening. "Well, what of it?" he questioned.

"Good and bad in all professions," Bunts hastened to say.

The sheriff had not spoken a word, automatically clamping his jaw on a ration of fine cut.

"Time is flyin', folks," he now interrupted, "an' my advice is to look in that satchel and see if anything's been stole." He squinted shrewdly at the heroes.

Lord Hemmingway suggested adjournment to the billiard room, where Bunts and Doyle wetted their whistles on a brand of Scotch whisky that few lucky mortals can afford. Heightened color lent attraction to Dan's strong face, and the millionaire philosopher peered at him with favor, as one might at a gallant three-year-old emerging from the paddock.

"Well, anyhow," insisted the sheriff as he saw

fame and reward slipping away, Miss Brewster reporting that the contents were intact, "there's enough to get a warrant out for him. We have his suitcase for evidence——"

Dan's cheeks paled. "The newspapers!" he exclaimed, invoking his teammate.

Big Steve launched his eloquence: "Make th' mistake of your life, Miss Brewster. They'd have a fierce article in th' papers. You know—anything about a ballplayer. That's what they all read. Know—myself. I played a while—you un'erstand; an amachoor. It'd go all over the country. Better just let me take his suitcase back an' drop it behind th' desk or some place. That's it—you take my advice!"

"He's fifteen miles on th' road by this time," murmured the sheriff; "but I c'n loose the dogs an' get him 'fore sunrise."

There was a chorus of dissent. "No; oh, no; please!" implored Miss Brewster. "I wouldn't have this come out for anything in the world. Mr. Stevens is quite right. Let it drop; do! I've forgotten it already."

Lord Hemmingway noted the sheriff's bargaining challenge of eye, and a crinkling of bills was heard as he led the official out to the veranda. Half an hour later, Dan Bunts and Steve Doyle cavorted down the moonlit road, chucking the suitcase aloft, thwacking each other and exclaiming: "In dutch—we certainly got him in dutch!"

They fell asleep smiling, their capacious lungs drinking in the sweet night air, Mr. Bunts with glove on hand.

To find a human being so unselfish and great-minded that he or she never entertains a grudge or desire for revenge is as difficult as Diogenes' task. Even though not expressed, the thought is there. Oftentimes a bitterness of this sort becomes a soul obsession, to be erased only by a gluttony of retaliation, if then. That choleric, red-faced, hard-swearing, hard-drinking trooper, General Blücher, when defeated at Auerstädt, his hussars and horse batteries cut to ribbons, conceived an everlasting personal hatred for Napoleon. The French emperor had a like feeling for this "debauched old dragoon," as he termed him; and, being

dictator, forced his retirement from the Prussian army. Hence it was that afterward on the night of Waterloo the English were content with victory; but Blücher, rankling for revenge, pursued the Grand Army, sabering, shooting, hacking without mercy until darkness stopped the slaughter.

As the days sped by in Atwater, Lucius Bolton grew more and more vindictive toward the man who had humiliated him, albeit young Caruthers had packed up and departed. Two messages "Slats" sent, the last one containing a full confession that explained everything but the suitcase mystery, which he himself did not understand. Both missives were returned from the Brewster mansion unopened. Chafing under the miserable indignity, he changed his abode to Greytown, the neighboring country-seat, and also changed his name. His telegrams to Caruthers, Sr., were in turn pleading and sarcastic, but the only answer was: "Progress—hold out another month." He wrote to his sister, asking her to help him; to find out if she did not, with the Brewsters, have some mutual friends. One notion was uppermost—he must straighten things

out with Dorothy, as he already called her to himself. He determined to see her at all hazards before he left the South—and the opportunity came in an unexpected way.

An active, vigorous fellow, not given to moping, Caruthers kept up his baseball training with the local club, which, upon witnessing his skill, extended him its warmest fellowship. Would he pitch for them in the first of their championship games against those "lobsters" over in St. Charles? Would he! Would a duck run from water? Would a hungry dog shun a succulent bone? In contemplation of this tilt—what he had hoped and longed for—the Harvard athlete was able temporarily to forget his grievance and mishap.

By all tokens, it was going to be an old-fashioned battle for blood between communities that had cherished a fierce rivalry since before the war, a provincial contest under the auspices of Southern chivalry and beauty, with much glory for the victors, plenty of betting and turbulent rooting. Caruthers, of Harvard, caught the enthusiasm and passion of Greytown's citizens; and when the day

arrived and he looked over the partisan crowd it occurred to him that he had never seen such intensity at a ball game. Somehow it took him back to old pictures of the Johnny Rebs, Andersonville Prison and desperate deeds of the Civil War. Even the scores of pretty girls in summery frocks, who occupied the grandstand and chairs that flanked the right foul line, could not dissipate this fancy. They were daughters and granddaughters of those heroines who loved their country and their protectors with a blind devotion, ready to sacrifice life for the cause. Instead of a merry diversion, this affair—he could not abandon the foreboding—promised to be serious.

“The St. Charles bunch!” shouted one of his teammates when a great cheering was heard down the street. “They’re a tough lot, but we cleaned ’em up one year in a free-for-all.” A brass band blaring “Sunbonnet Sue” appeared at the gate, followed by two hundred men and boys; and, as the delegation arranged itself in a solid body along the left foul line, Caruthers recognized the red hair and long nose of Clerk Heinze.

"Slats" felt his spine chilling. So this was the foreboding—this marplot of a hotel clerk—this "picture of hard luck."

"I knew it; I knew it—knew something was going to happen," he repeated bitterly.

There was the chug-chug of a big purple touring car that, contrasted with the other and smaller machines, suggested a transatlantic liner surrounded by dumpy tugs; and, following the darting movements of Heinze, "Slats" saw him shaking hands with the Brewster's chauffeur. In the tonneau were Dorothy, Miss Dearing, Bolton and Hemmingway. The Harvard man made a step in their direction and then halted. Yes, they had seen him. Dorothy, conspicuous with her black hair, her Panama hat, saucy brimmed, and her white serge suit, swept him briefly with a surprised glance; then turned away. But Caruthers held his gaze, drinking in every bit of her—the shape of her lips with their winsome upward twist at the corners; her ivory skin; the brown eyes of such wonderful depth and humor. Ye gods! What a vision of loveliness! What a woman to call one's very own! She

was the sort, soliloquized "Slats" as the band struck up "Dixie," who could turn him from a half-baked college graduate into a man of affairs. She could——

"Well, there's one good thing!" Doc Leeds, the Greytown catcher, broke up Caruthers' reverie. "They've picked Ham Doggett f'r umpire, and I know Ham's got his roll on us." It was an aid not to be despised, but "Slats" only smiled vaguely. He was still regarding Dorothy and his gaze shifted with hers to the visiting bench, where Lucius Bolton stood talking excitedly with two sunburned, business-looking ballplayers. Then young Caruthers, of Harvard, awoke indeed.

Except the white jacket of a bartender, there is no better disguise than a ballplayer's uniform. Proportions, lines, even countenance, appear changed. On the field you know him well; on the street he is a stranger.

"Slats" had passed by Big Steve Doyle and Dan Bunts in the Atwater hotel without recognizing them; but here, in their uniform, he only had to recall the spring of 1904, when Harvard came within



one run of trimming the Pioneers. And Caruthers was not nervous. He remembered that Doyle had struck out twice on a low one outside and that Bunts could kill the same sort. He met the stare of Doyle, Bunts and Bolton with a nasty, grim smile, but the two professional ballplayers returned it with a familiar hand-wave. Once having faced a good pitcher, your big leaguer never forgets him. They said nothing to Bolton.

"You leave it to us," assured Big Steve. "We don't care for Dan Bunts or anybody else. He'll get all he's lookin' for."

Steve and Dan, having settled down to regular training in Atwater, had nearly forgotten the pretender Bunts. When Clerk Heinze arranged for them to take part in the St. Charles-Greytown game they consented, the more readily because Miss Brewster and her party were going over. It would be a good work-out for Bunts, who was gradually acquiring the coveted underhand raise.

The reinjecting of the pretender into the scene did not alarm McNabb's stars—only amused them. It was "that Harvard lad," and a "swell pitcher,

all right." He was "kidding" somebody—maybe "himself." But Bolton took the matter seriously, tragically, revengefully. He wanted to expose the "professional" to the gulled fans from St. Charles. It wasn't "fair." Then he promised Steve and Dan five hundred dollars if they won the game—and Big Steve listened closely. Five hundred to a ball-player in the springtime! Sweet music, this. Steve was not backward.

"That'd help my friend Daniels through college," he observed thoughtfully. "And, say, old man, you might as well write out that check now, f'r we'll cop this game. Nothing to it!"

Bolton, only half assured, made his way back to the Brewster car.

It has well been said that of all honest sports baseball is the most uncertain, the reason being that there are eighteen men engaged and any one of them is likely to do the unexpected, the unusual. In this instance, advantage would appear to have been with the professional battery; and yet there were three handicaps for Bunts, of the Pioneers. To begin with, Dan did not dare "cut

loose" at this time of year. There was a long season ahead of him, with its bonus. He must nurture and fondle his "salary wing." Secondly, and not counting in the umpire, he did not have the Pioneers' machinery behind him. And finally, he had been upset by a traveling salesman who accosted him by his right name: "Hello, Dan! Remember me? We met down in the Piedmont at Atlanta last year. Hopton is my name. Go to it, old boy. No fear," he said, as Dan froze him with a look. "Won't say a word. I got twenty-five on St. Charles."

There were no such restrictions upon Caruthers, of Harvard. "Slats" concluded that his footsteps had been dogged and that this whole event was a "frame up" by Bolton and the Brewster crowd. The notion was nauseating; but when he saw Dorothy wave to Doyle and Bunts it was convincing. Every muscle in his body tightened. He was eager to pitch his arm off.

He motioned his catcher. "Those two men"—he pointed—"are professionals and in the big league, too——"

"That's funny," laughed the other, interrupting. "There's a red-haired guy—hotel clerk over in At-water—going round saying that you're Dan Bunts, of the Pioneers. Of course, nobody believes him. I wouldn't 'a' said anything only——"

"Well," instructed "Slats," "I just wanted to say that I'll sign you when they're at bat. An' watch me—watch close!"

Caruthers surveyed his battle array and at any other time he would have been regaled. His short-stop wore Sunday-go-to-meeting togs, white boiled shirt, high collar and pointed-toed patent-leather shoes. His blue serge, peg-topped trousers were properly creased. To him the occasion was social more than athletic. The third baseman wore an extravagantly padded football uniform, with some college insignia on the sweater. He was a favorite with both sexes, with all the spectators, because he was fat. Every time he jumped for a drive or stooped for a sod-cutter one could hear from the side lines: "You're all right, Bob." Some said he should have been a professional.

For Messrs. Doyle and Bunts, accustomed to

the greased whir of Barney McNabb's machine, the game did not progress favorably. Belts flew off; levers jammed and wheels stopped. The teasing raise ball that was to become famous in fast company later on did not fool the "rubes" so much as the lightning speed of Caruthers, aided by the umpire. If a curve was very wide the latter called "ball" when the leather was twenty feet from the plate. Doyle stood it for three innings—and then rushed at the arbiter and with trained skill stepped on his toes.

"Call 'em when they're over," he demanded. "You got an eye like a dead fish!"

Steve tried to explain to the St. Charles men that the enemy's pitcher had nothing but a "high fast one," but it did not help. Bunts himself, hero of many a batting rally, struck out principally because the umpire called two strikes that were neck-high. On the third, Caruthers sneaked over a drop and his catcher, though fumbling, recovered in time to nail the illustrious Pioneer at first.

"Slats" glanced over at the Brewster party.

Was Dorothy smiling? In his exultation "Slats" thought so.

Big Steve had even harder luck. With two on base and two out, he pulled a drive between third and short—a drive so terrific that the football-clad Bob did not know which way to jump. But, as village clown, his impulse was alive; and, flinging out his cap, lo! did the pill not stick?

This was looked upon, even by St. Charles, as a manifestation of genius.

"Aw, what's the use, now, you men? Give the boy a chance. That ball would 'a' knocked him down if he hadn't 'a' took his cap to it!" they shouted when Steve and Dan protested to the umpire.

The latter was defiant. "Get out o' here, you smart Alecs!" he ordered. "I know all about this game; that ball ain't teched the ground yet!"

By this time McNabb's stars were in a fine state of frenzy, for the game and five hundred dollars were slowly and surely fading away in spite of their heroic efforts. One, two, three, four runs they either scored themselves or drove in with solid

wallops, but the others backed from the plate, dazed by the college man's speed, and seldom got on base.

Doyle and Bunts, with midsummer zeal, from the coaching lines poured forth upon Caruthers such calumny as only a big leaguer can muster: "Hey, keep y'r toe on the rubber! Watch that step, Mr. Umpire. Yellow? Why, you're right from the daisy fields. When'd you leave deah old Hahvad, kiddo? It's a balk, a balk!" And then, from Bunts: "Better take back that suitcase you stole."

But "Slats" had been through like ordeals and only clamped his jaws the tighter and let out another link in his speed. So madly bent was he on winning this game that, as victory fluttered near, he failed to notice the crowd's sentiment. Even his own teammates eyed him coldly; Heinze had done his work well. Instead of an ovation when the last St. Charles man "died" in the ninth, there was silence; but only for a moment. The pretty girls, with gestures and cries of alarm, scrambled from the grandstand, automobiles spluttered and

wheeled away, but five hundred men and boys surged to the center of the diamond; and they of St. Charles, the losers, joined in one mighty, threatening accusation:

“He’s a ringer! A ringer!”

Not a person there but had learned that Greytown’s pitcher was Dan Bunts, the renowned Pioneer.

North, East, South and West, in this free land of ours, a legion of fans are quickly stirred to violence by one rank decision of an umpire. But to be imposed upon and lose money through the “ringing in” of an imposter, a professional, what honest, law-abiding American citizen would not lend a hand with the “tar and feathers”! For that was the program.

Like a chip in a flood, the unfortunate “Slats” was carried this way and that. They ripped off his baseball shirt, then his undershirt. Naked to the waist, he fought a good fight; but a hundred blows fell upon him, a dozen hands throttled him. And now came that inevitable weapon of a baseball mob—the pop bottle. Willing hands passed



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the missiles forward; others hurled them indiscriminately. One landed square on the victim's forehead, cleaving the flesh. Blood spurted and down he went, lost in the crowd.

Big Steve and Dan Bunts, careful of their arms, had rushed to the bench for their sweaters, intending, after the big-league habit, to hurry away and escape the crowd. They stopped now. Judgment told them to run. It was a nasty, dangerous fray to mix in. But there was another instinct. The game over, they bore no grievance, no personal revenge. They glanced at each other, wordless; but what they said was:

"He's a grand ball-player—one of us."

And now, plunging into the mass, Dan leading, there were presently heard groans and oaths, for two of the toughest warriors that ever broke into fast company were the assailants.

Immediately in their wake followed a partly bald, check-suited stranger, whose ancestors had fought with the Black Prince at Crécy. His language was ambiguous, but not his blows.

With two sweeps of his arm Big Steve cleared

a space around the unconscious Caruthers; and Dan, thumping himself on the chest, shouted:

"Hey! Hey! Let him alone. He's only a college kid. I'm Dan Bunts, if you want t' know! I'm Bunts, of the Pioneers!"

"Yes, damn you, and you threw the game!" It was the traveling salesman. "What'd I tell you all? That's Dan Bunts! I know him. And that's his catcher, Steve Doyle. All bets are off!"

Five seconds of amazed silence and then the rooters of Greytown joined those of St. Charles in a blood-curdling yell:

"They're all ringers! Tar and feather 'em! Kill them! Ringers!"

For the first time Steve noticed Lord Hemmingway.

"Duke," he said coolly, "get behind us and hold 'em off. Over there!" He nodded toward the purple touring car. Each taking an arm of the helpless collegian, Doyle and Bunts, heads down, butted, kicked and pounded their way, digging their cleats into the earth, humping their powerful shoulders, straining their sturdy legs, but never releasing



hold on Caruthers. Shooting out his fists, jabbing with his elbows, Lord Hemmingway ably protected the rear; and in this wise they reached the car.

"Here! Here! Yes, I have him! Quick! Quick! Oh, hurry!" Leaning out of the opened door, Miss Brewster, a breathing passion of distress and terror, dragged Caruthers into the tonneau. The others piled in on top. Two halting "chunks" of the giant machine, then a gatling volley, and away they went through a plowed field, over a ditch to the highway, followed by stones, clods and pop bottles.

They had gone a mile before Mr. Doyle discovered that he was sitting on Miss Dearing's lap.

"Excuse me, miss," he apologized, blushing. "I was kind o' rattled." He crawled over to the front seat and sat down by Dan.

Caruthers still lay unconscious, his naked body and bleeding head resting against Dorothy's knees. With her arm about his neck, she held a lace handkerchief to the wound.

"Oh, I'm so glad—so glad!" she kept repeating.

Five miles farther on, Big Steve took a look around.

“What’d I tell you?” he nudged Dan, who had borrowed a cigarette from the chauffeur.

“Said she’d sign up ’th him. I c’n read ’em like a book.”

## IN DUTCH

**I**N that part of the slums designated as Hell's Delight and at the outlet to one of its notorious alleys—Growler Lane—stood a taxicab, cranked up but motionless, the driver none too secure. It was about eight o'clock of a Saturday evening. Young ruffians scrambled on the machine, tooted the horn, opened and shut the doors, jeered and bullied in the argot of the neighborhood. Older and stouter loafers, low-browed gangsters, most of whom had "done a stretch," gradually assembled. A word or gesture was all that was needed to excite this riffraff to violence, for idleness and viciousness are much at one.

As the driver anxiously peered this way and that, hoping to see a policeman, two men came briskly from the opposite side of the street and put the question:

"Hey, chofoor, c'n you tell us where is Growler Lane?"

In contrast to the timid mechanic, these aliens in Hell's Delight were bold, indifferent, swaggering—a physical challenge. The shorter, thicker-set one pushed aside one of the ring-leaders; and he, strange to say, did not resent it. His evil mouth wrenched a smile as though the pleasantry were distasteful.

“Hi, yuh, Steve! Big Steve Doyle, ain't it?”

“Hi, yuh, Bunts! Hello, Danny!” This occasioned a general recognition.

And in the time that Mathewson could strike out a weak hitter, every dive and gin-mill in Hell's Delight, where blazed their pictures and records, knew that ~~Catcher~~ Doyle and Pitcher Bunts, of the Pioneers, were in Growler Lane, visiting Larry Malone, who that very day had been knocked off the fence at the ball park by a policeman and “broke his back.”

With incredible pluck and effort, the boy had dragged himself to a grocery wagon and thus had been transported to his mother and what was called “home.” He lay there now on a pallet, suffering intensely, surrounded by street urchins and slat-

ternly women who rocked forward and backward, groaned and gossiped dismally, as though the expected wake were already in progress.

Out of deference to Miss Caroline Hunter, of Settlement House Number Two, which the Hunter fortune had established, a tin pail—that familiar utensil of the Lane—stood unemployed on the table, a mouth-watering cynosure. Mrs. Malone's friends felt this occasion unusually fit for celebrating with a "quart of suds."

"Mrs. Malone, you're making a terrible, terrible blunder!" the settlement worker was imploring. "Larry should have been sent to a hospital hours ago. I beg of you, please, let me put him in my cab—it's waiting outside now; or, better still, let me call an ambulance——"

"Ambulance! Hospital!" cried she. "Never, I say. They'd butcher him! Faith, don't I know!"

"Sure an' they'd have his heart out before he was dead," voiced Mrs. O'Toole, shrugging her fat shoulders. "De-sect him, they would. What happened to Mary Ryan?" She paused, pugnaciously inquiring amid groans and exclamations. "Weighed

a hundred and eighty pounds when they took her away and—Mrs. Joyce, I'm after asking you what she weighed when they brought her back. Tell the lady."

"If it was a pound more'n seventy-five," quoted the other, "my man said he'd never lift another corpse. Jim said he c'd 'a' carried his side o' the coffin 'ith one finger—and Jim ain't what you'd call husky at that."

The pale, freckled face of the crippled boy writhed in agony.

"Oh, gee! Oh, gee! Oh! Oh, me mudder—do sumpin'! Can't stand it!—oh—can't stand it! Get de ambula-n-c-e, Miss Car'line. Oh, I'm hoited sumpin' fierce!"

Out of patience with their obstinacy and ignorance, Caroline Hunter, the only one of Josh Hunter's progeny to employ her wealth mercifully, wept as she dried the lad's tears of agony. Well she knew that every moment was precious; and she loved this sunny Irish boy—so willing he was to learn, so grateful for any help or tenderness.

The uncarpeted steps resounded with a heavy

tramping and clatter as Steve Doyle and Dan Bunts entered, part of the Lane's population following. Framed in the doorway of the tiny kitchen, they looked enormous. Abashed in this nearness to the Hunter millions, they introduced themselves awkwardly. Big Steve thought he had never seen a smile so wondrously sweet.

"It was very good of you to come so soon," she said. "I was afraid the messenger would not find you——"

"Not at all, miss, not at all," Steve dissented.

"This poor boy," she explained, "idolizes you and Mr. Bunts. He was badly injured at the ball game to-day." She lowered her voice. "If his spinal cord is affected I'm afraid there isn't a chance for him; and he—— I did so want to gratify him. He asked for you—asked constantly; and it was—it is—good of you." She whispered to the ball-players. The crowd was oppressive, jamming the narrow stairway and the two little rooms.

"Mr. Doyle"—she laid her hand on Steve's arm as her eyes flashed with spirit—"it is a perfect outrage that they won't let me take Larry to a hos-

pital. I've reasoned with them one precious hour. Now I'm going to do it, no matter what happens. Can I count on you to help me?" She included Bunts. "Try to persuade the mother—do!" And she was gone.

With difficulty the ballplayers edged through the children and women. Mrs. Malone's glare was sinister and suspicious, but her friends admired the athletes and their diamond ring. They represented more distinction than the wealthy Samaritan.

A smile of great joy touched the gamin's lips, as of one suddenly lifted from hell to Heaven.

"Say, dis ain't Big Steve, is it? Oh, gee! Steve, I never t'ought t' see yuh s' clost! And Danny—Dan Bunts! You wuz t' bat, Dan, w'en th' copper nicked me. Did yuh make good, Dan?"

The cripple's eyes were very bright, though a spasm of pain contorted his face. His narrow chest heaved and collapsed. His delight was terrible to witness as his breath fluttered through the open, narrow mouth. He darted a look of pride and triumph about the room to his mother, the women,



his urchin friends—beyond to the ruffians who grinned in savage adoration of the ballplayers.

What a strange thing is hero worship! In this country, as a rule, the only live hero is a dead one. Dewey, just arrived from Manila, had an ovation. Men and women thrilled to the heels at sight of the conqueror. A few months later a reaction set in and all was changed. Once grown up and a hero to yourself, you lack such sentiment; where there is envy, selfishness or indifference there can be no hero worship. It is an intangible quantity, dissipated by familiarity.

Big Steve Doyle and Dan Bunts in a hovel of Growler Lane, shaking hands with little Larry Malone who “got hoited” at the ball game, formed the infrequent and necessary combination. Even Mrs. Malone succumbed to the mystic passion and, heeding Bunts’ argument, prepared to accompany Larry to the hospital. Perhaps, too, the novelty of riding in a taxicab had something to do with it. The crippled boy held tightly to one of Big Steve’s fingers on his throwing wing.

“Gee, Steve!” he said, “I ain’t never goin’ t’ fer-

get dis. Any time I c'n do yous a favor——" A groan of agony interrupted.

Doyle averted his head. "That cop," he said presently in a husky voice, "ought to be broke!"

"Take it from me," called a big, thick-necked fellow: "if he ever pounds in this precinct——" He elbowed his way to the bedside. "It all comes," he declared wrathfully, "from cuttin' out dem twenty-five-cent seats. De kid here had his quarter—he used t' go up every Saturday; but he can't raise no fifty cents—none of us kin. Dem magnates is a lot of bloodsuckers——"

"Cheese it!" The cripple tried to sit up. "Dat ain't Steve's an' Dan's fault——"

All was commotion as the ding-ding-ding-ding of an ambulance sounded. Very tenderly catcher Doyle lifted the cripple in his arms and Bunts cleared the way.

"Hully gee! Steve, you're strong!" said the boy. "I was hopin' t' be a ketcher meself some day——"

The gate of the ambulance was closed, the gong tapped and in ten minutes Hell's Delight had re-

turned to its usual Saturday night of drinking, cursing, gambling and fighting.

In their apartments at the Hotel Braddock next morning Messrs. Doyle and Bunts dressed leisurely and ate plentifully, contemplating a day of rest; but Dan had just finished his grapefruit when, in unfolding the Sunday paper, his eye caught on the first page two-column pictures of himself and his partner, while Doyle, scanning the sporting page, was startled out of his appetite. The articles were well worth reading, for a reporter covering the Memorial Hospital had thoroughly "pumped" Mrs. Malone, telephoned the facts to his office, and a clever rewrite man had squeezed out twelve dollars' worth of space and earned a bonus for turning in the month's best "human interest story."

"Good chance to rap the Pioneers," the night city editor had said to the sporting editor. "A kid is knocked off the fence by a cop—breaks his back—a protégé of Caroline Hunter. Had twenty-five cents, but couldn't raise th' fifty. Why don't you tear off something about the Pioneers raising the admission fee?"

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The Star's baseball reporter, Tom Simmons, a man of thirty-five, had trudged his way up from a cub, through police courts, through the routine of general work, until, having developed a light and entertaining style, he reached the goal of special sporting writer. He was both conscientious and daring, after a newspaper fashion—that is to say, when the Pioneers first eliminated their twenty-five-cent seats he alone of his cult had the bravery to denounce the management, making himself so unpopular that he was threatened with exclusion from the park. The crusade had gradually crumbled for lack of nourishment—for lack of a capital cause. Simmons was careful, too, in writing of ballplayers' personalities; but, under the whip of the city editor, there came the newspaper instinct of "taking a chance," and thus it was that Big Steve Doyle, over his ham and eggs, read words he had never uttered:

"When I saw that poor little kid dying—all because of raising the prices in our park—I wanted to go right down and tell the magnates what I thought of them."

"After a while," Dan was supposed to have said, "only millionaires can afford to see a ball game. First thing you know, the ballplayers themselves will start a league—and then the poor will be taken care of as well as the rich."

For some moments Catcher Doyle and Pitcher Bunts regarded each other in heavy silence, not knowing whether to be vexed or pleased. As they finished the meal and repaired to the hotel reading room, where every morning a few favored admirers gathered, their conclusion was that "the dopest on the Star had his nerve all right." Listening to the congratulations of their friends, it gradually dawned upon them that they had done a noble and courageous deed in defying the management; and they began to think they really had been interviewed. Leaning back in an armchair, soothed by a good cigar, Steve retold the story with spirit. Bunts declaimed against the miserliness of the Pioneers and demanded justice for the public.

"Take it from me, boys," he was saying, "this'll make 'em sit up. I was a kid myself once. They

got plenty o' room up there f'r the bleacherites; and what I say is——"

Mr. Bunts suddenly dropped his cigar and his jaw. His arms fell limp and he tried to grin defiantly. Outside in the hall stood Manager Barney McNabb and it required no physiognomist to read his mind. Doyle got the "office" instantly and meekly followed the other two upstairs.

"Well," stormed McNabb when they reached Dan's room, "are you rummies gone crazy?—er—er—what?" He brandished the Sunday Star. "President Thayer had me up to his house at eight o'clock this morning—first I heard of it. He's insane, he is! What th'—What th'——" McNabb choked in his impotence of speech.

"Mr. Thayer says he'll send yuh to the Gophers—the Gophers! He c'n get ten thousand dollars apiece an' a bunch of youngsters. Wants me t' start the deal right now. Steve! Steve! You—— What the blankety-blank-blank nation is the matter with yuh? What you want t' butt into a ball club's business for? You got enough to mind y'r own affairs!

The Gophers—I'm tellin' you—that's where y're slated t' go——"

"Say, McNabb!" interrupted Bunts, with a fine show of anger. "Give us a chanst. We never made any such cracks. We never saw any reporter. That's all bull con. Wasn't I just tellin' the bunch downstairs as you come in? This stiff down on the paper's put us in dutch. Don't y' suppose me and Steve has better sense——"

"Well, jump to that office and make 'em deny it," ordered Barney, somewhat modified. "I could hardly believe you'd be such fools. Told Mr. Thayer that. Sue 'em for libel—Thayer'll pay th' costs. And first time you see that rat, Simmons, wallop him! Not too hard," he added, as catcher Doyle curled his powerful arm for a full swing. "Just 'ith the open hand. He's been makin' trouble for this club right along. So th' whole yarn's a fake, eh?"

"No, not quite," Bunts explained docilely. The prospect of being shifted to the Gophers—the tail-end club in the hottest, cheapest city of the circuit—had squelched his humane sentiments of a moment

before. "That's right about us bein' t' see the kid. Miss Hunter sent a note up t' the clubhouse—Steve an' me got it just as we were leavin'. We didn't mean nothing—that's all there was to it."

McNabb rested his arm on the mantelpiece and stared curiously at his two star players.

"Caroline Hunter!" he repeated blankly; then emphatically and finally, with derisive suspicion: "Caroline Hunter, eh? And you mitted her?"

"Oh, you understand!" tempered Doyle. "She was—you know—cryin'—and all like that——"

"Caroline Hunter!" It was the irritating, nasty tone McNabb used on the coaching line when trying to rattle a green third-baseman. "Well," he ended, studying the two men through narrowed eyes, "you'd better get her to help you out, then. I can't." And he slammed the door behind him.

"D'you know," said Doyle, with forced conversational repose, "sometimes I think McNabb is a little bit touched? You know—worrying. I've seen a couple of ballplayers go that way."

Bunts, striding up and down the room, had no reply but: "Gophers! Gophers!"



Mr. Doyle then ventured that McNabb had the notion that he—Doyle—had got fresh with Miss Hunter, but Mr. Bunts only replied with :

“Gophers!”

“If I had a thousand dollars,” declared Mr. Doyle, “I’d quit th’ game right now, Dan. I’d take that café we was talkin’ of. Gosh!” he suddenly exclaimed, “these magnates make me sick—and McNabb too! It’s got so a ballolaver can’t open his mouth.”

“Th’ Gophers! Th’ Gophers!”

“Yes, Gophers!” bawled Doyle. “All because o’ that reporter. I’ll Gopher him! I’ll break all th’ little bones in his face. Come on, Dan; we’ll look him up.”

They brushed their clothes, arranged their neckties and were about to start when the door jangled and in walked Simmons himself, timid and anxious enough, though he tried to put on a bold face. Instantly he felt that Daniel in the lions’ den was a diversion compared to this. He essayed to back out, but Bunts tossed him aside and locked the door.

"You fellows are not sore, are you?" The words were steady, but Simmons' stomach was quaking.

"Sore?" repeated Mr. Doyle softly, with an awful calm. "Oh, no; we're not sore. No."

"To th' Gophers!" screamed Bunts, shaking both fists under the newspaper man's nose. "That's where you've sent us!"

Mr. Doyle methodically removed his coat and rolled up a shirt-sleeve before combining his verbal attack with Dan's. As they impressed upon Simmons the enormity of his crime he shrank farther and farther into the corner. At least, they could not knock him very far. Every second he expected to find himself imbedded in the wall; but Messrs. Doyle and Bunts intended to have a glut of revenge after the style of the American Indian, first torturing their victim. In one of the pauses Simmons recovered sufficiently to ridicule the prospect of two such renowned heroes being sent to the Gophers.

"Why, the whole city would mutiny!" he declared. "They'd boycott the club. Sell Doyle and Bunts!"

"Quit y'r kidding!" commanded Doyle. "You've been in the game too long. Ballplayers have no rights. They c'n sell us if they want to."

Doyle's wrath caromed to this new and vital topic, and in the slight relief of tension Simmons eulogized the players.

"Everybody's talking about it," he hurried on "Miss Hunter—you're certainly in right with her."

"Cut that out!" blared Steve. "Don't you go to mixin' her name in this ball stuff. That ain't her gait. We'll take our medicine."

"Yes, an' it's about time you're gettin' yours," said Bunts between his clenched teeth. He hauled back his right fist.

"Hold on! Hold on!" The doomed Simmons flung out his hands. "Wait! Wait!" What could he possibly say to escape a terrible beating? "Wait, Bunts." The reporter's brain wriggled and hummed. "Miss Hunter, man! Don't you know that—know that she owns half—half of the club?"

"Huh?"

Doyle and Bunts flashed a surprised look at each other.

"Sure; that's right!" Simmons' eyes wavered; sweat flowed down his forehead. He ran a hand inside his collar, being nearly gagged. "She owns the—the controlling interest." His laugh was sickly assuring. "Why, you fellows are in right."

Simmons edged toward the door and turned the key. The ballplayers were talking together in a low voice. They permitted him to leave.

Simmons fairly tottered to a café, where he flopped into a chair and ordered a Scotch high-ball. He was as overcome and limp as a surgeon after a long and dangerous operation.

"Phew!"

His first sensation was joy for his unexpected deliverance, but thought of the immediate future speedily depressed him. One lie seldom mends another. He had now complicated himself doubly. After unwarranted quoting of Bunts and Doyle, he had "stalled" them—"stalled" two big leaguers. When they discovered it Reporter Simmons could not imagine himself of sufficient hardihood to stay in the city. He would chuck up his job, therefore.

Yes, that was the only thing to do—pack up and get work elsewhere. He cursed the national game, ballplayers, the crippled boy—and did not overlook himself.

And yet Simmons was no coward. To an extent, he was the victim of circumstances—a common rôle for the newspaper man—left to extricate himself as he might. After a while he roused under the sense of duty and pride. The incident was past; let come what might. He had a new story, a scoop—Bunts and Doyle booked for the Gophers! Back at the office, he shivered when he thought of those four menacing fists, but he kept on clicking his typewriter.

Simmons was discreet in quoting the Pioneers' catcher and pitcher; though this mattered little, for all the papers had taken up the cudgels. There were symposiums of fandom praising Doyle and Bunts and denouncing the management. Supreme Court judges pleaded for democracy in baseball. Old chaps who had played with the Haymakers, the Excelsiors, the Atlantics, who grew up with the game, put themselves on record for bleacher ac-

commodations. Larry Malone had become a great cause—a Dreyfus; a Fort Sumter.

The crusade had got beyond Doyle, Bunts or Simmons. Might as well try to plug the Assouan Dam with a toothpick. Willy-nilly, the two ball-players were advertised as leaders in a popular protest. Far and wide their exploit of charity and their views on fifty-cent baseball were bruited. Such headings as "Doyle and Bunts to Form a New League" and "Pioneer Players Sound Knell of Trust Baseball," caught the eye of a nation's fans.

President Thayer, Secretary Evans and the club's directors were amazed and enraged, but they kept silent. Having weathered many a storm of this kind, they reasoned that the fickle public would calm down. One thing they were determined upon—Doyle and Bunts, the agitators, must go. They expected Manager McNabb would staunchly oppose this edict; they could not understand his ready acquiescence.

Steve and Dan, of course, had the cue. McNabb suspected them of soft-soaping Caroline Hunter, controlling owner of the Pioneers; accused them

of trying to oust him from the managerial job. McNabb's every look—for he did not address them at all—said this much. Even now he was beginning to let them down, using Schwartz or the college catcher behind the bat and only sending in Bunts as a pinch-hitter, though Monday was his turn to work.

The adulation of a thousand men and boys, who cheered Steve and Dan as they left the park, was no compensation. Surlily, scowlingly, they accepted the homage, bolted their dinner—then locked themselves in their room for the night to discuss their misfortunes.

On Wednesday evening they finally reached the decision of calling upon Miss Hunter—an unpleasant and to them a revolting errand. Only the hateful destiny of Gopherdom urged them to ask a favor of a woman. Rather than join this despised tail-end club, Doyle had determined that he would quit the game; and Bunts purposed going in for prize-fighting.

Miss Hunter welcomed them cordially and told them, all in a breath, how Larry's injuries were

limited to a broken hip; that he was in a plaster cast, resting comfortably, and hoped to see his friends Doyle and Bunts playing ball before long. The surgeons said he could be taken to the park in an automobile and she had promised him this treat.

Big Steve, sitting on a slender mahogany chair—you may have noticed that big men usually pick out the most delicate furniture—shifted nervously.

His powerful legs were braced on either side as though he expected an immediate catastrophe. He glanced meaningly at Mr. Bunts, who was more firmly established on a leather couch. Dan did not fail.

"I guess," he said, "Larry won't see us in spangles again, Miss Hunter—neither me nor Steve."

"Why, Mr. Bunts, you don't mean—I don't quite understand."

"Well," took up Steve, recovering his balance, "you un'erstand—we can't see th' Gophers f'r a minute."

"Gophers?" from Miss Hunter.

"Gophers!" from Mr. Bunts loudly.

Steve eyed Miss Hunter shrewdly. "You don't



mean to say," he asked, "that you haven't read how me and Dan 'a' been canned to those bushers?" Apparently she was mystified or else a trained actress. Steve, famed as a close judge of women, was puzzled for once. He permitted Dan to do the enlightening. Meanwhile he studied her, judging that she was something over thirty. Her hair was very black, exposing a few touches of gray. She had long eyelashes and profound brown eyes. Steve thought she was the sort to "stick to a guy" if she "fell" hard enough. He also concluded now that she was telling the truth.

Miss Hunter leaned forward and in tragic regret asked of Dan: "Then I am the cause of you gentlemen losing your positions?"

"You're jerry," proclaimed Mr. Doyle; "but that reporter——"

"Oh, no," rebuked Miss Hunter sweetly. "Don't put it on poor little Larry."

Steve blushed to the color of red paint. "What I meant was, you're on—you're next." Steve halted in confusion. Bunts looked at him pityingly.

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Miss Hunter smiled amusedly. "I'm not very well up on slang."

"You're all right," voiced Steve formally.

"This is absolutely horrible!" deplored Miss Hunter. "I know what it must mean to you. Oh, I wish—I wish I could do something!"

"You might put one over on those stockholders."

"Do you know any of them?" inquired she eagerly. "Perhaps I might have some influence."

"Only you," grinned Dan.

"Me?" She smiled at the jest. "I only wish I were one, Mr. Bunts."

Doyle's heart stopped beating. He gulped. "Then you don't own half th' club?" he asked in an unnatural voice.

"Why, frankly, Mr. Doyle, I don't believe I ever heard of the Pioneers before Larry was injured. I have never been interested in sports. In goodness' name, whatever made you think that?"

Doyle and Bunts sprang up like wild animals unleashed.

"That reporter on the Star—Simmons—told us you owned th' controllin' stock. That's why we

come here. Simmons! Simmons! on the Star!"

Miss Hunter stared in blank astonishment. Then her face became stern.

"Why, he must have been——"

"Kidding us!" broke in Doyle fiercely.

"It was nice work, all right," added Bunts. "You got t' hand it to him!" Bunts watched the fingers on his right breadwinner congeal slowly into a bunch of fives.

"Indeed, I don't blame you," said Miss Hunter, marking their ominous intentions. "He really ought to be chastised."

"No fear of that," growled Steve. "They won't fire him. What he needs"—he smacked his fist into his open palm—"is a good wallop, Miss Hunter. Excuse me, but it's the only way t' handle his kind. They c'n pull anything and get away with it."

"I think you would be making a mistake," objected the settlement worker judicially. "And, Mr. Doyle, since my name has been brought into this, I wish you would let me deal with the reporter. The editor of the Star is a personal friend of mine, and"—she tossed her head resolutely—"I am going

to see that justice is done.” She moved to the hallway. “You see, this would only implicate you, Mr. Bunts. Everything is in your favor now; you’ve done no wrong. So you’ll promise, then—no ‘walloping’?”

Steve and Dan reflected her whimsical smile as they backed into the night.

When reporter Simmons arrived Caroline Hunter was so majestically austere that he wondered how the newspapers could ever have portrayed her as a comely ministering spirit. While she assailed him bitterly his eyes wandered to an oil painting of her father, Josh Hunter, the man who in his time could cause panic or prosperity with a nod of his head. In the sagacious brown eyes and the dominating chin he saw a resemblance between father and daughter. Simmons was not flustered. It took him back to the old days of general work on the paper—days when, at fifteen dollars a week, he went through every hardship to get a stick story. Besides, he reckoned his job as good as lost.

“I shall not try to apologize,” he said. “There

is no excuse for me—that is to say, being a woman, you would not appreciate my predicament. It was simply a matter of being hammered to a pulp by two athletes in the prime of condition. I make no claims to physical prowess, so I got out the best way I could. Certainly it was neither honorable nor brave. I am truly sorry, Miss Hunter, if it has caused you any annoyance; but”—he shrugged his shoulders—“there you are!”

Though she prided herself on being a business woman, Caroline Hunter found herself at a loss in dealing with this specimen of the male sex. He was indifferent, yet not unconcerned—apologetic, but not humble.

“What do you propose doing to—to help these men?” she asked testily. “Surely you owe them something?”

“I have thought of that, Miss Hunter; but a newspaper man’s influence is limited to the results of his writing. I took up this cause of twenty-five cent baseball in all sincerity, using the Larry Malone incident as a peg. I fully expected to get myself disliked by the management, but I surely

had no intention of bringing trouble on Doyle and Bunts. Even now I can hardly think that President Thayer will dare send these stars to the Gophers. The fans are simply wild. I'll tell you something, Miss Hunter." The reporter's face colored with anticipation. Instinct prompted him to glance about for eavesdroppers. "I must pledge you to secrecy?"

It was a question. The settlement worker, mildly curious, promised.

"Well, then, only to-night a delegation of rooters came to our office. They want to make some kind of a demonstration on Saturday—that's the last game for Doyle and Bunts. The papers are to be signed on Monday when the Gophers come here for a five-game series. We talked over a lot of schemes and suddenly I thought of a cracker-jack. What d'you suppose?"

Miss Hunter caught something of the reporter's enthusiasm.

"Well, my idea is for the fans to keep absolute silence—d'you see? Not a cheer; not a handclap. Isn't that a peach? It'll show th' management just

what the public thinks. And, Miss Hunter, I shouldn't be surprised but what old Thayer and the rest of them'll back water. You ought t'see this game; it's going to be some demonstration—believe me—if they can go through with it."

The rich settlement worker smiled.

"I've never seen a baseball game in my life, Mr. —er—Mr. —"

"Simmons."

"If Larry is strong enough, I'll take him up—poor boy, he is miserable because Bunts and Doyle are leaving the Pioneers. He can talk of nothing else. However, Mr. Simmons, I have small faith in your demonstration. Now, see here." She tapped her pencil peremptorily on the table. "You must find out for me who the stockholders of the Pioneers are. I am convinced that the only way to accomplish anything is through them. I think you should take this—assignment, I believe you call it. Hicks, Murphy & Hicks are my attorneys. They may be able to help you. Here is a card to them."

Simmons tucked away the card thoughtfully. "It will not be an easy job," he reflected. "For

some reason or other baseball clubs do not care to have the names of their stockholders made public. The Pioneers are not incorporated in this State. They're like the trusts, Miss Hunter; in fact, baseball is a big trust. I dare say right now that the Interstate Exhibition Company owns stock in half a dozen other clubs. They——"

"Interstate Exhibition Company!" exclaimed the heiress in startled tones.

"Why, yes," answered Simmons; "that's the name the Pioneers are incorporated under. It's often done." He was puzzled at her abrupt and keen interest.

She was about to say more, but checked herself. Fervently she shook hands with him and smiled benignly.

"Mr. Simmons," she averred, "you've done more good than you know of. And—maybe I'll have a scoop—is that it?—for you very soon. Good night."

In certain regions of savage Africa the natives can communicate intelligence for hundreds of miles with miraculous speed and in a manner unexplained



by exploring scientists. They do not need wireless. Neither did the thirty thousand friends of Steve Doyle and Dan Bunts—the thirty thousand who were seated or standing when “Batteries for To-day” were announced and McNabb’s Pioneers prepared to take the field.

The umpire blinked at the silent reception of his oratory, usually the tocsin for a mighty howl and hum. He came close and scanned the press box for some explanation, but the reporters evaded his inquiry. During practice there was more or less of the customary noise, shuffling of feet, crowding, exclamations, and the players had observed nothing untoward. It was then that the committee of one hundred fans accomplished their final missionary work, distributing hand bills, black-bordered: “A Testimonial to Steve Doyle and Dan Bunts: Do not cheer or applaud in any way at this game.”

For two days the members of this committee—clergymen, barbers, saloon keepers, lawyers, butchers, men of every vocation—had forsaken all other duties to devote their time to canvassing the city’s fandom. Forming a gauntlet outside the various

gates, they had further tipped the conspiracy. The "bagging" of Julius Cæsar transpired no more secretly or effectively.

There were two points of particular interest for the spectators: the Hunter automobile, just outside the rightfield ropes, which contained the settlement worker, the crippled boy and the reporter; and Box Fourteen, reserved for President Thayer—this was empty.

"Cold feet; he's wise, the coward—lost his nerve!" was muttered from one to another on the grandstand. In the bleachers the language was more trenchant.

McNabb, too, was irritated over the absence of president and secretary. He had quickly sized up the situation and he recoiled at being the lone "goat." Standing in front of the players' bench, his gorge rose and his cheeks flamed. His blue eyes were two violets in a bucket of blood. He took one menacing step toward Doyle and Bunts, but only one. Mr. Doyle's countenance was dismaying as he mumbled to Bunts out of the corner of his mouth. The other players crowded to the end of the bench.

The two victims looked as though they could—and wanted to—clean up the whole team.

McNabb employed his energy in gripping a bat and megaphoning to his battery—Plummer, a tall, well-favored, right-hand pitcher, and the Dutchman backstop, Schwartz. In subtle fashion he tried to belittle the bench-warming stars with such expressions as “You’ve got everything, boys! Don’t mind the blankety-blank bugs. Nobody c’n make any trouble for my club!” Doyle emitted a low, savage growl. McNabb heard it.

“You’re workin’ f’r me—not the fans,” he nagged. “They’ll be pullin’ fer yuh in a minute.”

And now began the most eccentric battle ever seen on a ballfield—the players striving to disrupt the conspiracy with daring feats, the fans trying to strangle their emotions. The very heavens stood still. Old Sol flickered as though he might go out. The venders of peanuts, popcorn and soft drinks gradually hushed their raucous calls. One defiant youth was chucked over the bleacher fence; another was rolled down an aisle, his merchandise wrecked.

For all the noise, beyond coaching, there might

as well have been empty seats. The silence was frightful, ominous and disconcerting to the players.

"If I were you," advised Manager Nichols, of the Prunes, to McNabb, "I'd send for more cops. If this mob ever breaks loose they're likely to put both clubs out of business. This beats anything I ever saw!"

"I attended to that," snapped McNabb. "There'll be a dozen mounted ones here directly. Ginger up your men—that's all you got to do. We'll break this up. They can't hold out much longer. That fat guy over in the box'll croak pretty soon." He pointed to an apoplectic rooter, purple of face, whose friends were undoing his collar.

It was the third inning, with three on bases and two out for the Pioneers, Nichols' men being a run to the good. Leftfielder Trenchard, a .370 clouter, came to bat. As he toed the plate twelve mounted policemen, the sheen of their sleek charges glinting in the sun, trotted in and, soldier-fashion, took stations. Instantly they lent confidence to the players. What of the mob now! Sympathy for Doyle and

Bunts? Yes. But how about bread and butter? Let the fans choke to death!

"Oh, you Trench, boy; slam 'er out!" howled McNabb from the third-base line.

"Don't skip any cushions!" bawled Foghorn Schwartz, coaching off first.

McNabb took a look at the fat man. He was bending forward, his fingernails denting the box gate. A peanut seller was holding ice on his head. This was only an incident. The whole arena was an inferno of repressed emotion. Strangers grappled each other's hands. Strong men clasped their temples as though tortured with neuralgia. Long-drawn "Ah—ah—ahs!" of agony, moans, whimpers, whines and groans escaped from thirty thousand throats.

"Bang!"

The tarnished white ball shot out on a line well inside first base, going directly for Larry Malone. The urchin seized the settlement worker's arm.

"Fall down, you slob! Break y'r leg, you mutt!" he cried, mastering his shrill voice. "It's a homer—a homer—a hom——"



A PEANUT SELLER WAS HOLDING ICE ON HIS HEAD.

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What! *What!* WHAT!

The umpire was waving back the runners.

"Foul ball!" he said.

Before McNabb could reach the arbiter to tramp on his toes, a crash and a cry echoed from the centerfield bleachers. An ice-wagon driver had, in his frenzy, smashed an undertaker on the jaw, knocking him senseless. While the unfortunate fan was being carried away, McNabb railed at the umpire; and for once the spectators could get the full purport.

"You dip!—you yegg!—you second-story crook! No wonder your brother's in prison. They say you welshed on him; now I know it's right. You been saying I'll finish in the second division, eh? Well, when I am you'll be in stripes!"

"Get t' th' bench!" shouted the ump, "or I'll set you back ten days. Can't pull that bluff stuff on me! Why don't yuh pay f'r your wife's dresses! T' th' bench!"

Each suddenly realized that he was "showing up" the other in the hearing of thirty thousand people, giving away inside tricks of the trade. Fans were



attentive to catch every word. It was something to remember and talk about—a novel treat.

Casting his eyes upon the multitude, the umpire began to tremble. Rather had he heard the daily howl and threats than the gurgles and gulps of men whose contorted features proclaimed them assassins. Walking over to his confrère at the pitcher's box, he said:

"Give McNabb all the close ones. Take no chances. If the mob starts anything run for the home bench and beat it under the stand."

McNabb swung a hopeful glare about. Here and there he saw half-guilty grins, but the silence held. Baseball, the nation's safety valve, was plugged, and plugged tight.

"I'll get 'em yet—blank 'em!" he gritted.

Reporter Simmons, alone of that harrowed multitude, wore a calm countenance. In the constant tapping of his foot and pulling out of his watch he betrayed anxiety of some sort, but he gave little heed to the game. Once he drew cautiously from an inside pocket a proof page of the Star's evening edition and gave Miss Hunter a peep.

"They're taking them off the press now," he whispered. "They can get here in half an hour. Sacred stars and stripes! I hope nothing happens!"

"So do I hope!" she replied briefly. The settlement worker breathed spasmodically, almost as excited as Larry, who was doing his best to explain the game.

In the sixth, McNabb had a chance to tie up the score, with a brace of runners on and none out. Pitcher Plummer, a notoriously weak hitter, followed; and on every lip one could read the words:

"Oh, why don't he send in Dan Bunts?"

The cripple in the automobile wrung his hands in grief and covered his eyes. "No use, Miss Car'line. It's all over. This boob couldn't hit de gashouse wit' a door-mat. Oh, my—gee!—look at him!—swings like a ferryboat!"

And so he did.

Shortstop Tanner, leader-off in the batting order, nervous from McNabb's shrilling, popped a foul, and the burden fell upon the green rightfielder, Hank Myres. As he strode to the plate a murmur of comment trickled over the grandstand and all

eyes gazed at the left corner, back of third base, where always were located a score of thirty-second-degree rooters, led by Ethan Edwin Ball, potentate of the order. Rooter Ball had discovered the raw outfielder in a minor league and his influence had put him on the team. It was the lad's great opportunity of the game and his nervous, spectacled discoverer gave every indication of mortal collapse. Intimates had urged him not to witness this demonstration, fearing he would succumb. His next-door neighbor, Doctor Flagg, sat in the adjoining seat and at intervals put the stethoscope to his chest.

"Breathe natural, Ethan," he now pleaded. "Take it easy. Don't look; I'll tell you what he does."

Ball's chest sank in. Weak, hollow groans tickled his Adam's apple, but he was game; and when Hank Myres poled a three-bagger the delirious man bit his tongue until it bled.

Unfortunately for the conspirators, the home team played such brilliant ball as to give them a two-run advantage—and the convulsions became more and more violent. Human endurance could stand little more; but these were stern and loyal

fans, loyal to Doyle and Bunts. When Fielder Trenchard, in the eighth, made an astonishing catch, robbing the enemy of three tallies, it seemed that the grandstand would surely give way. The outbreak started with a wizened, clean-shaven clergyman, who threw up both hands and croaked, somewhat like a bullfrog. A dozen hands reached to strangle him. Spartan methods were necessary and a burly cabdriver grasped his scrawny neck.

"Now you jist root once more!" He tightened his grip.

"Leggo!—leggo!" gasped the miserable dominie. "I wasn't ch-cheering. I swallowed m-my cigar!"

"Did, eh?" threatened the cabdriver. "Well, take mighty good care yuh keep it down."

From row to row passed the word, as hundreds scowled at the nauseated, yellowed face:

"What's th' matter with that guy?"

"Swallowed his cigar—th' rube!"

Reporter Simmons was growing very fidgety, twining and untwining his fingers and muttering:

"The guerrillas—the guerrillas; they've got to come soon. Come on, Joe; hustle 'em——"

He explained to the smiling Miss Hunter: "That's what we call them—the circulation huskies. Bannon's their boss; no chance of his falling down. But they ought to be here now—five-fifteen. They must get here!" For the second time he drew forth the proof page, with its extravagant headlines, discussing them with the settlement worker.

The ferret eyes of Larry Malone, roving about the field, espied a white bundle flung over the centerfield fence, plump among the bleacherites.

"Hey, Simmons!" he interrupted. "What's comin' off over dere?"

"They're here! They're here!" screeched Simmons, leaping to his feet and waving his hat, until the surrounding automobilists thought he had gone daft.

Bundles of the Evening Star were coming over at all points now. It was the beginning of the ninth inning, with one of the enemy down and victory in sight. McNabb watched the strange sight from in front of the bench; saw the papers scattered—a snowstorm of print; heard the gathering thunder, that sounded like the roar and crackle of a forest

fire; and when the volcano broke forth in all its fury he started for the underground passage.

Plump! There fell at his feet a parcel of newspapers, face up. The manager dropped to his knees. So did Steve Doyle and Dan Bunts. Ravenously they grabbed copies from McNabb. As the tempest raged louder and louder they read these headlines:

“Pioneer directors vote to restore quarter seats! Deal off with Gophers for Doyle and Bunts! Caroline Hunter found to be real owner of club!”

Though a wall of fans pressed against them, Barney McNabb seized Big Steve by the shoulders and looked him square in the eyes. “Ferget it, Steve!” he ordered. “I c’n see by y’r face you weren’t wise. It’s all right—ferget it!” And they disappeared through the underground door.

Robbed of their prey, thousands of crazy rooters remained to march around the field singing pæans, dancing, turning somersaults and cheering the names of Bunts and Doyle. Others kept their seats, devouring line by line the wonderful news.

“Listen, Larry.” Miss Hunter’s cheeks were

flushed with superlative joy. "I can explain it to you in a minute. You see, I knew that I owned fifty-one per cent of the Interstate Exhibition Company—my father bought it many years ago; but I had no idea that this company meant the Pioneers until Mr. Simmons told me. My lawyers attended to the business and I—I just took the profits. Mr. Simmons deserves all the credit, Larry."

The boy's narrow face wrinkled in perplexity. "An' you could 'a' seen de Pioneers all dis time fer nuttin'?" Miss Hunter nodded and laughed buoyantly. Pale from exhaustion, the gamin leaned back on the soft cushions.

"Gee!" he sighed.

## THE INDIAN SIGN

**I**F you're lookin' for a quiet place t' board, Steve," suggested Third Baseman Dasher, of the Pioneers, "why don't you try my mother-in-law's, down in Grove's Court? She serves big-league meals—nice cool rooms—there's a couple vacant now. I lived there till Mrs. Dasher and I got hooked up. Take a look, you an' Dan—can't beat it!"

"Two rooms?" queried Big Steve Doyle as he sorted out his mail in the clubhouse. "I was countin' on taking Southpaw Jones along too. You know his folks an' mine are related, and me an' Dan are kind o' helpin' him along. He had something to-day, Dash, didn't he?"

"He has smoke, all right, Steve; he ought t' make good. Say—not getting personal—but does that busted nose of his interfere with his breathing? He must 'a' got an awful kick some time. What happened to him?"



Steve glanced about vainly for his partner, Dan Bunts, the notion of leaving the park without his company being unnatural.

"No, it don't hurt him at all—that nose. He was slidin' down hill when he was a kid on th' farm and his sled run into a wagon—I think it was. Zowie! Caught him on the smeller. They never had it fixed—and a darn shame, too! Say, Dash, he's sort o' sensitive about it—wouldn't say anything. Un'erstan'?"

"Aw, nix, Steve; sure not. I was sorry f'r him to-day when that guy back o' me kept callin' him 'Dog-face.' For half a cent I'd 'a' pulled him off the grandstand—only McNabb's sore on that stuff. Well, s'long! Go down and see Mrs. O'Hara's place."

Messrs. Doyle, Bunts and Southpaw Jones found the new lodgings much to their liking, for Mrs. O'Hara knew the ways of a ballplayer—his reticence in meeting outsiders, his desire for prompt dining-room service. When the three athletes returned from the game there was not a minute's delay in putting before them nourishing soups and

heaped platters of plain but brawn-making food. Isolated as much as possible at one end of the table, they performed a brave trencherman's duty with dispatch and without conversation. What though the rattle of their weapons did echo the defense of Thermopylæ or a bout at quarter-staff! 'Twas a serious thing—this stoking of big leaguers.

Fleming, who worked at the necktie counter at Cook & Ramsey's, where the fact of his living in the same house with Doyle and Bunts gave him marked standing, fairly laughed as he watched Big Steve demolish the cornbeef and cabbage. It meant strength to that mighty salary wing and half a dozen of the enemy pegged at second. It was the stuff heroes are made of.

"Big Steve et well last night," he would deign to inform Haskins, of the perfume counter. "They won't steal on him this afternoon—take it from me!"

Young Hopper, the country boy who earned seven dollars a week in a butter-and-eggs store, felt that if he could eat as heartily fame and fortune might also be his. At the risk of dyspepsia he cleared the commissariat decks at each meal. When,

on his bi-monthly holiday, he treated himself to the ball game he thought of vegetable soup, roast pork and apple pie every time Big Steve winged a sprinter at the middle cushion.

There was but one vacant seat at Mrs. O'Hara's table, the one adjoining Southpaw Jones; and for this Catcher Doyle was grateful, as it marooned his charge to some extent—prevented him from fanning, a vice toward which he seemed inclined.

One might have thought that this raw recruit from the minors, with his dented nose and goose-winged ears, would shun society. On field or off, his countenance was sinister and repelling, an effect that his poetic brown eyes and good-humored mouth did not offset. On his first swing of the circuit, veterans misjudged the tyro pitcher, picking him for a rough customer, battle-scarred and treacherous. This helped Jones to get away with his speed—about all he showed in twirling goods.

Big Steve probed for the truth.

"I won't say he's yellow," he confided to Bunts. "It ain't that exactly. No one in our family ever turned color——"

"Too good-natured," put in Dan.

"And an awful fall guy f'r women," added Steve sourly. "I see him squinting at that manicure gal across the table; can't keep his eyes off her——"

"Holy smoke, Steve!" interrupted Bunts. "I wasn't going t' say anything, but Saturday night I nailed him bumping highbrow fungoes on the stoop at that school-teacher; you know—woman with the pearl hair an' watery lamps—sits next t' th' eggery kid. Lot o' literatoor and science stuff she was shooting and him swallowin' it like a Great Dane chewing cream-puffs! He's a mark, Steve! Some skirt'll tag him off first base before the season's half over."

Big Steve turned a significant gaze upon Dan.

"Well, that won't do, will it?" he said slowly, and his jaw fell with a guilty grin, which Mr. Bunts answered in kind. The truth was that the ventures of Doyle and Bunts in picking winners at various race-tracks had been unfortunate; and when relative Enoch Jones came along, his pockets bulging with money—for the southpaw busher owned a valuable farm—Big Steve found him convenient financially.

“But, outside o’ that”—Steve waved away the unpleasant topic—“I don’t think Enoch has the stuff t’ stay in fast company. Furthermore, I say he ought t’ be back there in Pennsylvania, lookin’ after his crops. Think of it—four hundred acres in Lancaster County! He c’n raise everything. His old man willed it to him. The Joneses are all well-to-do; th’ Doyles never had anything. He’s th’ Welsh side o’ the family; I’m the Irish. I told McNabb this port-wheel cousin o’ mine was Irish too. Only f’r that, Mac wouldn’t ‘a’ give him a chance. What’s he want to play ball f’r, anyway? Just imagine! If you had a farm——”

“How much are you into him for now?” questioned Dan Bunts, side-arm twirler, pinch-hitter and substitute fielder.

Catcher Doyle drew forth a little book and calculated.

“It’s two hundred and fifty dollars, all told; and don’t forget, Daniel, there’s seventy-five dollars o’ that on you. You played Oleander at Latonia when we was in Cincy—remember?”

“Yeh,” Mr. Bunts assented wryly. And then:

"S'pose he'd make trouble—sue you, or the like o' that?"

Doyle ruminated as he puffed his cigar, then reverted to the puzzle:

"I'm telling you, Dan, it's got me why he ever left home at his age—he's twenty-five—to butt into baseball. No, I don't think he'd come back f'r th' measly two hundred and fifty dollars. By th' way, I see that Kindergarten's running to-morrow; that dog is about due now—"

"Weisenheimer on th' ladies, you are," chaffed Bunts. "Why, I'd lay a bet there's a woman at th' bottom of it, as the saying goes. He's got a sweetheart out there in the lunch-basket league, an' he wants to make a hit with her—something like that. Un'erstan' what I mean?"

Catcher Doyle thought this over and at supper next evening admitted that his partner's philosophy was timely.

It had been an eventful and happy day for Southpaw Jones. The Pioneers were one run to the good and needed the game to keep in first position. When the Sharks got runners on second and third, with

two men down and Kid Curtis, left-hand demon clouter, up, Manager McNabb had a hunch that he would pickle one and put the game on ice. Oh, for an experienced southpaw—the only foeman who could baffle this hitting prodigy! Three hits already Curtis had made off the Pioneer's right-handed flinger.

"Send in Enoch!" called Catcher Doyle, who could hear his manager's thoughts ticking. "I'll handle him."

Big Steve was a natural-born backstop—a man to set his field, rattle a batter and coach a pitcher. With his dented-nosed cousin in the box, he put forth extra effort.

"I'll pull the signs wide open," he instructed Jones. "Coster, out there coaching, will get them and tip the hitter. But don't you pay any attention 'less I tie me shoelace; give him a curve then, but waste it. Just you zing that low fast one over the inside corner. Yuh might shake y'r bean occasionally as though you thought I was wrong. Come on, now."

A nice bit of strategy it was; and Manager Mc-

Nabb, on the bench, rubbed his hands and talked out loud to himself, while Kid Curtis took a couple of strikes. With telepathic instinct, Doyle out-guessed the champion clouter. With three and two on him, the latter caught the catcher's sign—something different—probably a fast one high inside, for they would not take a chance on a curve at this stage; but—*zwish!*—low and inside she came, and before Curtis could shift his swinging chop the ball was in Big Steve's mitt, the game over and thousands talking of Southpaw Jones' extreme cleverness in fanning Kid Curtis.

The meal that night was sugar-cured ham, corn-fritters, sweet potatoes, followed by lemon pie. Catcher Doyle, who got no credit whatever in the newspapers for his part of the victory, an injustice to which time had inured him, had just commented on the ham's sweetness when a hush fell upon the dining room. At the door Mrs. O'Hara was talking to a tall girl, perhaps twenty years old, chestnut-haired, violet-eyed, nose slightly aquiline, mouth small and complexion clean as a new league ball. The tucked linen waist above her blue serge skirt



was cut square, exposing her comely neck. In mere man's judgment, her form was exalting, enticing, symmetrical. She raised her dark eyelashes, which she manipulated with languorous caution, and shrugged her rather pointed shoulders.

"I had not been informed of the dinner hour," she said to Mrs. O'Hara. The words were studied, the accent forced New Yorky. "This seat, heah?"

Big Steve Doyle held his freighted fork pendent, then whipped a glance of terror at his charge, who unknowingly—for he had been entrapped by Fleming into conversation—awaited his sugar-coated doom. Slowly, gracefully, but surely, the tall beauty moved to the one vacant chair and Mr. Doyle tramped on Mr. Bunts' foot, a call for help. Bunts telegraphed, "Courage!" his expression indicating that the disfigured southpaw would not dare raise his eyes to this dazzling peri. At that moment, however, as she glided into her chair Enoch met her full face and blinked like one coming from pitchy darkness into sunlight.

"Meely!" he gasped. "You here!"

"Why, how do you do?" she answered easily, with a trace of loftiness.

Jones stared about the table open-mouthed. His admiration was so plain that Miss Carew, the school-mistress author, who wrote love stories for the Human Interest Monthly, observed to Miss Dechamp, the manicurist:

"I declare! It's a romance—childhood sweet-hearts, I dare say."

"They're not wearing those Dutch necks this year," returned Miss Dechamp icily. "She can't have been long in the city."

"My friend, Miss Wells," introduced Jones to Steve and Dan. "We both come from the same town. Don't this beat all!"

Tabletalk spluttered torpidly for a while, like damp firecrackers; even the butter-and-eggs boy slyly stealing a look at the fair newcomer and the bewitched southpaw. They formed a monstrous contrast—she so regular of feature; Enoch with goose-winged ears and a chasm so sharp and deep, right in the middle of his nose, that the lower portion of that organ suggested an island lying some-

what atilt. The manicure girl became loquacious all of a sudden, discussing with Miss Carew the latest styles of neck adornment for women. It was evident to Mr. Doyle, shrewd interpreter of the fair sex, that her darts were poison-tipped and aimed at the late arrival, who, however, had perfect control, which is usually more than enough to match the swiftest speed.

"Why, I left Lancaster nearly a year ago," narrated Enoch's friend in an even voice. "You remember when I graduated from business college? Well, I took a position with Mr. Wildman, the traction king in Philadelphia. Now I'm over here with Caldwell, Pierce & Caldwell, the corporation lawyers. Hardly seems as if I ever lived out there in the woods. I'm crazy about the city. I was to sup last night at the Carlton with Jack Pierce—you've heard of him—he's in the international polo tournament—junior member of our firm."

Enoch's countenance spoke of ingenuous pride, but Miss Dechamp tittered loudly; and Big Steve, loyal to his cousin, thought it well to inquire:

"You take in any of th' ball games, madam?"

"I'm terribly interested in baseball," returned Miss Wells, with more spirit as she delicately impaled a fried sweet potato. "By the way," she beamed on Jones, "have you come across Arthur Scull yet? You know he's playing too. Isn't he perfectly wonderful? I saw him pitch in Philadelphia. He's quite a hero out home." Her glance flitted from the stern-looking Doyle to his more pleasing partner. "Do you know him, Mr. Bunts?"

"Doc Scull, on th' Prunes? Should say so," rejoined Dan, his eyes very bright, for in his secret judgment he had classed the fair guest as a big-show girl. "He's all right, Doc is—an' making good."

"He's very clever," she went on as the southpaw winced. "We were at normal school before he took up dentistry. He gets his diploma next year."

"Smooth pitcher," asserted Bunts. "And wise at that f'r getting out of the game."

Catcher Doyle gave and repeated the usual signal for quitting the table and Bunts, of course, obeyed, excusing himself elaborately; but Southpaw Jones, though his flushed happiness had changed to ashy

gloom, remained. The room was silent as Catcher Doyle's flat-footed and ponderous tread preceded the light, buoyant step of the fast baserunner.

As becomes a philosopher, Big Steve did not speak until ten minutes afterward, when he had lighted his strong cigar and cocked his heels on the window of his apartment, that overlooked the street.

"Ain't he the glutton for punishment?" he demanded of Dan, with emphatic censure and irony.

"Well, big fellow, didn't I call the turn?" was the answer of Bunts, whimsically triumphant. "Didn't I say a woman was at th' bottom of it? Here's the dame."

Mr. Doyle grudgingly admitted this. "She's got the Indian sign on him, all right," he growled. "It's all off now. He couldn't pitch to a blind asylum! And me just after pullin' him through there to-day! What c'd he do 'gainst th' Prunes to-morrow—especially if they work Doc Scull? You see him at th' table when she brought up his name?—yellow as a dead fish! I'm telling you, son"—Big Steve swung his feet about and dropped them on the floor

—"there's a mystery back o' this. How is it this gal comes on here and picks out th' same place where Enoch is boarding? There's a broken bat in the bag somewhere—you watch!"

"Maybe Doc Scull put her up to it—just t' rub it in—un'erstan' me? He seems t' be pretty strong."

This opened such a wide path of speculation that Messrs. Doyle and Bunts neglected their accustomed game of billiards and sat until a late hour discussing the strange situation. On the point of turning in, they spied the southpaw and Miss Wells coming up the street; and in a few moments Enoch shambled into the room, a picture of shame and sorrow.

Doyle and Bunts lighted fresh cigars and then the former demanded in compelling tones:

"Let's have it straight, kid. She's got the Indian sign on you, hasn't she? Come on, now—over th' plate."

"Indian sign!" confessed Jones, with a shudder. "Steve, I been stuck on Amelia ever since we were kids—can't help it. We had the best times to-

gether; her people lived right 'cross the street from us. I used t' take her to picnics an' all like that. Everybody thought it was good as settled we'd get married. And me, why I never thought of anybody else, Steve. I s'posed she felt the same way as me—you know, Dan?" the tall, angular farmer's son invoked of Bunts as he gestured, with his big hands, hands that had been hardened and broadened in years of harvest-field labor. Bunts was unfeignedly sympathetic.

"And she won't have you?" he asked.

"Why—why, I never asked her, Dan. Don't y' see?—the way she looked at me and me at her—it was—— We used to sit on a white-covered sofa at her house. I never even kissed her—I thought too much of her—I——"

Enoch halted suddenly. His eyes were moist. Big Steve undertook to relieve the tension by turning the gas low, remarking that it might make the room cooler. Then he suggested:

"Maybe a little rough work would 'a' got you further, Enoch. I've known fellows to win out that way."

"No, Steve; she ain't that kind. Meely's as pure as gold. It wasn't that. She would 'a' had me only for this Doc Scull. I know. I know. He played semipro ball out there one season. Before that, she never went out with anybody but me. He's got looks, Steve—an' you see me!" Unconsciously the southpaw's hand covered his disfigured face.

Mr. Bunts made considerable noise helping himself to a fresh cigar from Steve's box.

"Then she's signed up with Doc Scull?" he asked.

"I couldn't tell." Enoch shook his head. "She's wearin' a locket he gave her and she talks about him all th' time. You see he has th' looks, and she—you can't blame her, Steve, can you? Ain't she pretty, Dan—ain't she—an' sweet?"

Doyle and Steve made noises of assent.

"Nobody c'n gainsay that. And out home I was all right. The fellers and girls knew how I got hurt—my nose didn't make any difference with them, or with Meely. It was never mentioned. 'Hornets' was my nickname, Steve, because o' me getting stung up with a nestful once." His at-



tempted hearty laugh sounded hollow and dismal to the others, who had nothing to say.

Enoch was silent a moment and then his very heart seemed to break as it gave forth its sorrow :

“But to-night, boys”—the jerky sentences came between sobs—“to-night, after th’ roof-garden show, I took Meely over t’ Voll’s—she only drinks lemonade, Steve—an’ every one knew me—kept laughing at me. C’d hear ’em say ‘Dog-face.’ Meely heard them an’ she colored all up—said we’d better go home. She—— Oh, Steve!” The disfigured youth broke down as he buried his face in a pillow and his body shook with sobs. “If I only had th’ looks!”

Big Steve, embarrassed at the recital of another man’s sacred inmost feelings, puffed furiously at his cigar and cleared his throat several times.

“Enoch,” he finally said, “I’m not after criticising; but if she can’t see you just because of your crooked map then my idea is she ain’t worth tyin’ to.” He looked at Bunts for confirmation.

“It’s not as though you was a Wild Man of Borneo or a Human Skeleton,” comforted Bunts;

"and we saw one o' them freaks with a wife just about as pretty as y'r friend. Remember, Steve, in Los Angeles—that year we trained on the coast?"

The southpaw continued to gloomily contemplate his unhappiness.

"Forget her," counseled Steve. "It's a heap better not to be married, for a fellow like you. A ballplayer is away half th' year an' when he does sign a contract he wants to know his wife is on the level. He has no chance t' watch her. He's out playing his head off to put some money ahead f'r a rainy day and maybe make a home; and, at that"—Steve switched to philosophic generalization—"you never know how it'll break. Nine times out of ten there won't be any teamwork. You get your signs all set, give her the hit-and-run—an' what does she do? Steals! You tell her t' wait it out—an' what happens? She swings at th' first pitched ball. She rhinestones the game—that's what! And while I'm saying it I might as well tell you, Enoch, I think this friend of yours is a rhinestone, an' I c'n generally pick out real ice."

"No, sir; no!" The southpaw leaped off the bed

and waved his long arms. "She's just a little set up with coming to the city. Meely's th' best girl you ever saw! She kept house when the mother died, raised th' children, cooked an' washed—and with all that work got an education f' herself. No; she's no rhinestone, Steve."

Cross-countered in this fashion, Catcher Doyle could only retort with:

"Well, you got just one face, haven't you? And y' can't change that; so——"

"Steve"—the lovelorn flinger's eyes were intense—"you said something that's been in my head a long time." He jerked from his inside pocket a newspaper advertisement announcing that Dr. Emil Hahn could remodel the human countenance, no matter how deformed. "What I was thinking, Steve, maybe if I went t' this doctor he could fix my nose so Meely wouldn't be ashamed o' me. Don't you think that might make a change in her?"

Bunts turned up the gas and Big Steve, with some torment, slowly began to read what marvels a beauty doctor could achieve:

"Facial defects remedied; blemishes removed; contours of beauty supplied; marvelous metamorphosis of countenance and character; an Apollo from a Caliban; an Adonis from a donkey——"

"That's the stuff!" interrupted Bunts sharply. "If he c'n put that over he's all to the big tent. For what I say is, Steve, how d'ye know it's his beak she's balking on? It may be his ears." He walked over and thumbed the appendages. "Not gettin' personal, Enoch; but look at y'rself now when I bend 'em in—what a difference it makes!"

Wearily southpaw Jones obeyed, stepping before the mirror.

"What I mean is," explained the pinch-hitter, "if he's going in f'r this it might be just as well to have his ears tightened up a little. I don't see how they c'n do it, but according to this advertisement nothing feazes 'em. What d' yuh think, Steve?"

Catcher Doyle gave the question due consideration and agreed with his partner that, if the plan were tested at all, Enoch might as well go in for a complete beautifying.

"Just th' same," he pointed out, "it's the toughest

thing in th' world to switch an Indian sign. I mind a pitcher when I was in the minors that had it on me two whole seasons. You know him, Dan—'Chesty' John Haggerty they called him—worked in Milwaukee f'r a while. An awful stiff he was, but I couldn't hit him, couldn't bunt, couldn't wait him out. Soon as he walked in the box, it was the red-skin for me."

"Yes; an' there was Jocko Hall, with th' Wolves three years ago," added Bunts. "We didn't win a game off him until September. Some say it was the fans that got him rattled that day, but I think it was Red Carter makin' a homer. Pitcher and he had a batting average of .034," he explained to Enoch; "and he got two home runs off Jocko. Just held his bat in th' right groove. After that, we knocked Hall out of th' box—an' he hasn't been much good since."

"Well," pleaded Southpaw Jones, "don't that show you c'n switch the sign if y' keep at it?"

"All right," concluded Big Steve, who, with a hard day's work before him, could not afford to lose any sleep; "we'll think it over. But my advice is

to ferget her. You haven't got a hit off her yet. G' night."

Southpaw Jones was beginning to discover that advice is the cheapest thing in the world—will-power the rarest. Rolling and tossing in his hall bedroom, what from emotion and the heat, he scarcely slept—bad training, indeed, for a big leaguer. He was sluggish at morning practice and in the afternoon when his rival, Doc Scull, of the Prunes, greeted him with the usual "Hello! How yuh hitting?" Enoch looked the part of a woe-begone suitor.

Scull grinned, with a tantalizing sneer, the sneer that seldom left his face even though the game went against him. He was known as a chilly customer, his very indifference being an asset to his trade. It was hard to get his goat; and when a player did it was his custom to shoot a bean ball—that is, direct a fast one at the batter's head. He was a pitcher to beware of, good-looking, successful, keeping mostly to himself and sufficiently wise to study a profession, that he might not some day be relegated to the bushes.

Miss Wells appeared at dinner that evening, more charming than ever, in a trim suit of white duck that Miss Dechamp estimated as costing seven dollars and twenty-five cents at a special sale. For some time there was an unexplainable restraint, severed finally by Fleming, who directed his remarks on the glorious victory—or, rather, slaughter—in which the Pioneers had pounded Doc Scull out of the box and won by a lopsided score. Fleming took the bit in his teeth and addressed catcher Doyle:

“Thirteen hits you got off Scull, wasn’t it?”

Big Steve nodded and through a mass of semi-masticated pot roast further assented:

“B-h-r-r-p!”

“We’d ‘a’ made twice that if they hadn’t took him out,” added Dan Bunts, with a sly grin and a glance at Miss Wells.

Fleming, exhilarated at having for the first time drawn conversational blood, as it were, from the big leaguers, went into an exhaustive description of the game as told in the sporting extras.

In one of his pauses Miss Wells asked Jones:

"Did you pitch against him, Enoch?"

The southpaw flushed at hearing his first name from her lips and stammered:

"N-no; I didn't work to-day."

"That's too bad," she said. "It would have been quite a triumph."

There was such a sweet condolence, both in tone and look, that Big Steve dropped his table weapons and stared at her.

"Kidding him to a finish!" was his conclusion, which he conveyed to his partner in their free-masonry language.

Doyle was positive of this when, after dinner, they saw Doc Scull balanced easily on the stoop railing, his cheerful sarcasm none erased.

"Had your batting rags on to-day, boys?" he laughed.

Catcher Doyle only grunted, but Dan retorted:

"All I'd ask, kiddo, is they stick you in every game. I'd win that automobile, sure!"

"Oh, I'll get you next time, old boy. Th' season's young yet."



There was an awkward moment at the narrow stairway landing as Miss Wells, descending, met the ballplayers going up. The same expression of pity that Steve noticed at the table touched her countenance and she was about to speak; then changed her mind.

The long silence which followed after the ballplayers had watched her depart in company with Doc Scull was broken by Mr. Bunts.

"Looking at it one way and another, Enoch," he advised, "I can't see how it would do you any good t' smash him. Steve says it'd probably have the opposite effect on her—and Steve's generally got their number. On the other hand, if y' go in for this beauty-doctor stuff you're like t' be out of th' game a long time——"

"I don't care if I never pitch again," wailed the southpaw, "so long as I get Meely."

"You're on, then," pronounced Big Steve somewhat testily. "To-morrow morning's the time. Come along, Dan; let's go out and jostle the ivories a while. Feels though I could put it over you with three cushions."

Dr. Emil Hahn they found to be a heavy-faced, heavy-handed, heavy-bodied German, whose eyes were malignantly domineering. Upon making an inventory of Enoch's blemishes, he cheered the southpaw by promising to utterly transform his countenance.

"Dis ear," he said, "she mus' be incision made. De nose, him easy! Two—maybe tree—weeks. You stay in my sanatorium, upstairs. Always, yes, advance bayment. Sometime dey get, what you call, cold foot—*hein?* I am also hypnotist," he added unctuously, with an eye on the ballplayers' diamonds. "I make de mind to concentrate and imagine she is somebody else."

He began to wave his heavy hands in front of Southpaw Jones, who drew back in alarm.

"Hey! None o' that!" commanded Doyle sternly. "He's hypnotized enough already."

Big Steve mistrusted the doctor, with his air of diablerie; and when they were paying the cashier he asked a few pertinent questions, telling who they were.

"From the Pioneers!" she exclaimed, her red lips

opening widely, her black eyes sparkling. "Do you know who my father is? Joe Russell!"

"What—old Joe Russell, the ketcher?" from Doyle. "Why, I used to peek through th' fence at him when I was a kid. You Joe Russell's daughter? Well, I swear! Say, miss, he was some backstop in his day."

"That's what he says about you. Oh, he keeps track, I tell you."

"How is he?" inquired Dan. "I seen him, too, the last year he was in the league."

"Father's paralyzed from the waist down." She said it in a matter of fact way, as one accustomed to the daily care of an invalid.

Big Steve was shocked.

"I didn't know that," he offered. "D'ye think he'd care fr a baseball? It's th' one Dan hit to the galleries yesterday when he cleaned up. I was going t' give it to a fellow at the billiard parlor." Steve took from his pocket a horsehide pill that showed but one welt of the ash. Bunts also fished about vainly for some memento.

"Dad'll be crazy about this," Miss Russell cried.

"He has an old one up there that we play catch with sometimes. He pretends he's behind the bat once more and I'm the pitcher." She tossed the ball up and caught it in her small hands. "Listen!" she cautioned, beckoning them. Beside the ballplayers she was a dwarf—a small-waisted, plump-chested little lady, whose eyes were mischievous, sympathetic and serious all in one expression. "This doctor is a fake!" She reached up and laid a tiny forefinger in the dent of Enoch's nose. "You know what he puts in there? Paraffin. He injects it—phwt! It'll fill up all right; but sometimes it don't last long—it melts."

"It what?" they cried.

"Melts. Two people sued him since I've been here."

"Huh!" snorted Steve. "I knew there was something fishy about that guy. Enoch, get y'r money back."

"Hol' on," objected Bunts. "How about his ears? Can he fix them?"

"He's pretty good on ears," answered Miss Rus-

showed their various bruises, talked of horse racing, theatres and domestic troubles. An outsider could not have guessed that this band of professional athletes, moment by moment, neared its battle for life or death; that hearts were bumping heavily, fiercely; that though tongues wagged lightly, every brain drummed a devil's tattoo. Could the stranger pitch? Could he win for them the pennant? Would their names resound victorious from Pole to Pole? And more especially would they be a thousand dollars richer by nightfall?—for such was their meed in event of vanquishing the foe.

Leisurely, McTish strolled over to the slab where his catcher sprawled and gurgled under the hearty thwacks of the assistant trainer. With each step, Larry could hear the room subside, until it was quite hushed. And then:

“How's he look to you, old boy?”

The veteran warrior shifted a brownish bulk from one cheek to the other, and sat up.

“If he don't balloon,” he said, “I make a bet the Buccaneers are shet out.”

With this display of emotion, he again resumed

his recumbent position, but Larry knew that that one speech had regained for him all his lost prestige, and stepping forward confidently, he announced :

“I want every man to be on hand at a quarter to one. If anybody asks you who’s going to work, you don’t know. This lad’s folks is dead hostile to his playin’ professional ball, an’ it’s got t’ be kept quiet. You know what I mean!”

The taciturn conduct of McTish and the assurance of Joyce inspired the Rough Necks to a superb resoluteness when they emerged before the howling multitude. Rabble fashion, those countless thousands on stands, bleachers and field, who were ready an instant before to thumbs down on the toppling chieftain, immediately took heart at the home team’s dazzling practice. Why despair when the players themselves appeared surcharged with confidence? And yet what signified this preliminary perfection? McTish had no pitcher to cope with the Buccaneers’ cunning-handed Ross—“Broncho” Ross—whose pet twist suggested the lightning evolutions of an untamed mustang!

A sombre blue-clad umpire doffing his cap at the

home plate, stilled the tumult momentarily, and then as he proclaimed: "Batteries for today—Ross and Brander; Flynn and Joyce!" a sound like the swish of a comet rent the summer haze.

"Flynn! Flynn! Flynn! Who's Flynn?"

Banks, pyramids and oceans of humanity palpitated with the question. Reporters, imprisoned by screening in front and a barb-wire of elbows and fists behind, shrieked the demand vainly. The oldest knew of no pitcher named Flynn. Nor did the club president, secretary, treasurer, stockholders—not any one of that vast throng, excepting a spectacled physician on the front row of the grand stand, who breathed at intervals.

Posed near the home bench at the entrance of a subterranean passage under the grand stand, which led to a private pitching enclosure, and thence through a small gate to the outside world, McTish took a savage delight in this tremendous sensation.

"I'll show 'em," he kept repeating. "I'll give 'em a jolt they'll never forget! Send me back to the minors, would they!" He glowered at the surging, rocking humanity.

Not until the very last second, when his men had won the toss and taken their positions; when the umpire was shouting urgently, "Batter up!" did Larry fling open the door, dramatically introducing the unknown, who walked briskly, eyes straight ahead, to the pitcher's box.

What the spectators saw was a tall, well-knit athlete who showed no signs of nervousness or braggadocio. Long-armed, straight-limbed and graceful, he had all the outward requisites of an expert in his craft. A strong jaw, close-lying ears and firm mouth indicated grit. His sharp resemblance to Larry McTish was commented on by the opposing big leaguers, but, like Ivanhoe at the tournament of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, Gibbons inspired the great mob with curiosity alone, until his sheer dexterity moved them to sky-splitting applause.

Grimacing, clutching, digging his steel-cleated toes in the earth, McTish hurled back the taunts of his old enemy and rival, Turk McCue, who strove to rattle the Plum Islander, imploring his men to: "Make him pitch;" "Lay th' wood to it;"



"Take your time;" "Swing on him;" "Kill it, kill it."

Loyal fans who came prepared for defeat, hugged one another and cried with joy. Who or what he was none cared now, so long as he could win the pennant. In a box near the visiting bench, Mrs. McTish laughed hysterically, telling herself: "You'll win, Larry; you'll win!" Mrs. Bunner automatically waved a black-bordered handkerchief.

When the Buccaneers went to field in the third, neither side having scored, it was evident to Larry that the game would be a "pitcher's battle." He had small fear of Gibbons, who bore himself gravely, studiously, lest he miss the slightest signal from the crafty Joyce, who so utilized the Plum Islander's dismaying speed, control and deceptive curves that the enemy knew not what to expect.

But the home team was in like manner helpless before the artful Ross, and so Larry, under cover of the home bench, abruptly changed his persuasive, counselling tactics. Seizing his diminutive short stop by the scuff of the neck, he ordered:

"You Rabbit, go up there an' get hit, d'ye hear?"

Get yer base, if he knocks y'r head off! This game'll be won with a single run, an' we're goin' to make it now!"

With Spartan submission, the Rabbit obeyed, crowding the plate, jumping from side to side, forward and back while McTish and Joyce competed in deriding the too-confident Ross:

"You got it in the neck;" "He c'n pitch rings round you;" "We'll beat you with a high school boy;" "Back to Sandusky for yours;" "He's forgot more'n you know!"

Awake to this ruse, the Buccaneers urged their man to: "Put 'em over;" "Let him hit it;" "Keep steady, old boy!" But Ross, stung by a particularly malicious taunt, turned to answer McTish, and as he recovered sent in a wide one that the Rabbit stopped with his ribs. Using every artifice of skill and coaching that he had gained in his long service, the Rough Neck leader caused his men to advance the martyr, base by base, until, finally, while the earth shook and the grand stand swayed, he had the supreme joy of scoring a run. As an under-current to the spectators' outburst, Larry seemed to

hear the still, small voice: "McTish has made good!"

So cheered was he that, abandoning the coaching box, he waved his cap to Mrs. McTish and took opportunity of answering in person a note from the club's president. On his return, Larry marked with alarm the absence of Pitcher Flynn.

"W-what's become o' Gib—, Flynn? Where's that p-pitcher? Anybody se——"

Canvassing the bench in a trice, plucking his men this way and that, Larry emulated the maneuvers of a whirling Dervish.

"Thought I see him go in there a bit ago," informed one, pointing to the private passageway. "I ain't sure, but——"

As the umpire beckoned imperiously for "batter up," McTish, with fancies of the pyromaniac setting fire to the grandstand, rushed through the alley so distractedly that he overlooked the Plum Islander, who, lured by the unusual temptation of pink lemonade, was at that very moment gulping the seductive fluid but a few bat lengths distant.

Impelled by the sound of a gong and shrill cries just outside the fence, Captain McTish scooted over the pitching court, wrenched open the little door and shoved through, stumbling into the arms of a policeman, who was stationed there.

"That's him. It's him," were the strange exclamations Larry heard from two powerful, low-browed men in uniform, who jumped from a covered wagon that was backed close to the gate, and surrounded by a crowd of gamins.

With a precision that indicated thorough training, one of the men grabbed the captain-manager's right arm, the other his left, while the policemen deftly kicked his legs from under him, and before McTish could remonstrate, he was rattling over the cobble-stones, horse galloping.

"Plum Island Patrol" was printed on the wagon, so that pedestrians were interested, but not puzzled, at the uncommon yells issuing from inside, nor at the perilous rocking of the vehicle which betokened a desperate conflict. Dashing down toward the municipal ferry the driver shouted when half a block away for help.

"He's violent—fightin' like a wildcat—lend a hand, men."

The extra weight of the two deck hands who joined the asylum huskies in sitting upon Larry as he lay prone on the wagon floor was superfluous. By this time the Rough Neck captain had succumbed to a certain process termed "hanging." His neck had been bent backwards over a piece of blocking, a handkerchief tightened around his throat, and it was not until he had crossed the ferry and reached the asylum steps that he revived.

"'Twas a near call, take it from me," said one of his captors, holding a wet handkerchief to his discolored eye.

"Once I was of a mind to head for th' police station," put in the driver, who was not to be eliminated from the deed of heroism. "Gosh! I thought he had you that time, Joe. Soaked him in the eye," he told the group.

"Who'd ever suspect Gibbons o' gettin' violent!" exclaimed the laundry superintendent, and others echoed his sentiment.

As Larry stirred and partly raised himself the

injured attendant drew back his heavy foot. "Turn on yer best friend, would ye, ye skunk! I'll——!"

"Hol' on, Bill," he was advised. "If Doc. Gay hears about it, he'll bounce you, sure!"

The other swore, but sullenly retreated, for two staff physicians were hurrying to the spot.

The younger, a shrewd, red-haired chap, roughly turned Larry's face to one side, and looked up suspiciously.

"Sure this is Gibbons, my man?"

"Sure?" the captors snorted in unison, backed up by a general sneer of assent. "Don't you see th' little bunch o' white hair?"

The physician still looked doubtful.

"Ain't that his broke finger?"

While they were pointing out more characteristics, the renowned manager, who with fractured teeth, swollen cheeks and puffy lips, resembled no one in particular, slowly sat up and in husky but determined voice appealed to the medical man:

"My name's Larry McTish!"

A burst of laughter went the rounds.

"Now I guess you'll believe us," jeered Bill.

"Wot was he sayin' only last week his name was, when we played that 7—I game?"

"Larry McTish, that's right," came the reply from several.

"Of course! It was one of his deloosions," snorted Bill.

"Why," explained Joe in an injured tone, "that's what give us the idea of goin' to th' ball grounds. I says t' Bill, I says: If Gibbons is went to one place more'n another it'll be to that championship game between th' Rough Necks an' the Buccaneers. Jest what happened is, Gibbons butted in there—they saw he c'd pitch, an' they made him a substitoot. Made him a substitoot—they did."

"We was waitin' outside the private gate—couldn't get in front fer the crowd, an' first thing we know, he comes right to us——"

"Instink is what I calls it," said Bill. "Same as a homin' pigeon!"

"Don't go, friend, don't go!" cried Larry, holding out an imploring hand to the physicians. He began to rise slowly and painfully, for every bone in his body creaked with pain. "May I never touch

finger to ball, if I ain't Larry McTish—you've got the wrong man! It's a mistake—a fierce mistake. I can prove it! O, say, fer th' love o' God, friend, don't leave——”

Larry clutched the young physician, but he disengaged himself testily, and a strained, eager look warmed his countenance as a Bedlam of cries echoed from a far corner of the island.

“Too bad,” he consoled Bill and Joe, with a sly smile. “You might as well dig down in your jeans. We've got it on you 8—4, an' only the fifth inning.”

Two more attendants, similar to the others in countenance and physique, approached panting and when the physicians had disappeared rounded upon Larry with surpassing oaths and threats. There was something, too, of grief.

“Jest t' think of it—a hundred good, honest plunks throwed on them swab doctors,” exclaimed one when he could get his breath. “O, Bill, what d' we ever bet fer—me whole month's wages!”

“Month's wages!” he screamed at Larry. “We made up a purse o' twenty-five apiece—give 'em



every good man on th' Island, countin' on th' second team t' win with you pitchin'!"

"An' what did I promise you?" shouted Joe. "A meerschaum pipe, didn't I say?"

He suddenly hurled himself upon Larry, throttling him with both hands.

"Hol' on," ordered Bill, and then in solemn, menacing tones, told the thoroughly frightened McTish:

"There's only one way t' square yourself, Gibbons—jump in there now an' win this game. They only got four runs lead, and you kin hold 'em down——"

For the first time Larry distinguished familiar yells; through a long vista of elms he recognized scenes familiar. Plum Island was also having a championship game, and by all tokens it was a red-hot one. Involuntarily the big leaguer's eye sparkled, his fingers twitched.

"A chance! We got a chance," whooped the attendants, rushing him under a hydrant. Their voices were now wheedling, caressing, fawning. In a twinkling they had soused him from head to foot

and he found himself skipping through the avenue, leaving a damp trail, and hardly touching the gravel.

"We'll fix it all right with the super, Gib, old boy." "No jacket for yours, lad!" "Jest win back that hundred, an' leave th' rest to us!"

He was in the diamond now surrounded by fourteen hundred lunatics whose frantic demonstrations culminated in the pitcher—a one-time circus rider—leaping lightly upon Larry's back. "Here's the ball," he said sanely enough. "One out, a man on second, and this guy, the Ant Eater's got two and three!"

And now it was that the years of careful life, stern training and early work (for Larry, like most professional ball players, had begun his career with pitching) stood the captive in good stead. Brushing aside a lock of wet hair, tightening his belt he leisurely surveyed the fielders' positions and then flashed an eye at the catcher's signals—three fingers in the "big mit." Interpreting at random McTish thought that under the circumstances a "high fast one inside" must be called for and so effectively re-

plied. When the next man died on a grounder to short, Larry, in spite of mental anguish, became interested. Stoically he endured the maniacal exultations of the crowd, and gruffly acknowledged the hungry gratitude of his four backers who patted him on the shoulder. Long a stranger with hero worship, even from idiots, it refreshed his soul.

Not until his team went to the field in the ninth, having tied the score, when a copper sun had dipped into the horizon and night winds stole from the river did McTish feel recurring shivers of physical dread.

"Hold 'em down now!" promised one attendant as Larry started for the box, "or we'll straight-jacket you till you're paralyzed!"

"I'll drop ye out the fourth story window!" threatened another.

"And I," said Bill with an ogre grin, "will crucify you an' break every little bone in yer body!"

The certainty of this three-fold martyrdom, the horrible vision of being buried in a pauper's grave, mangled out of recognition conspired to demoralize

Larry's self-control. Nell would never even hear what became of him!

McTish had lost that indefinable something called "nerve," and as one after another the bases filled he kept chattering with unwitting appropriateness: "Got th' Indian sign on me—th' Indian sign!"

Indeed, the worthy McTish was so blinded now with tears, his swollen eye and the oncoming darkness that he could see distinctly only the white jackets of the staff physicians to the right of the plate, and next to them—ah, yes—quite plainly, the uniformed bulk of Attendant Bill.

There came upon McTish at that minute the miserable injustice of the whole thing—Doctor Gay's imposition, Gibbon's treason, his home wrecked, his wife prostrated, and he on the threshold of some ghastly doom! The game, he knew, was hopelessly lost. What the future boded he no longer cared. It was revenge now—wild, untameable desire for revenge, and even as a great sob clotted his throat Larry concentrated all his might in one furious, accurate drive, aiming at the

lower button on Bill's blouse. A moment's pause to see him double up like a jack-knife and Larry was leaping, dodging through the crowd and scuttling over the lawn toward the river pursued by the entire population of Plum Island. He had no notion of a goal until, approaching the stone wall, he spied the little ferryboat nearing shore, on the fore-deck Doctor Gay, and shifting his course he thundered down to the slip, made a flying leap and landed safely with just enough breath to gasp:

"Save me, Doc; save me!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Arc lights were dazzling, and the streets were whirring with a city's noise when a strange figure, disguised in yellow pea-jacket and black sou'wester, toiled up the long hill that led from the water front. Accompanying was a smaller, waspish man who capered and bounced, doing imaginary things with an imaginary baseball. On his head was a hat rim only, about his neck the half of a collar.

"But the ninth, Larry, you ought to have seen the ninth! O, my heart and soul! A man on second and third; two out, score same as when you

left—one to nothing, and ‘Bull’ Slattery at bat. Women fainting—fan died of heart disease—thirty-five thousand people going mad. You never saw anything like it——”

“O, yes, I did,” dissented McTish, with a groan.

“Third strike, ‘Bull’ hit a line drive that caught Gibbons right on the jaw—dropped like a dead man. For one second you could ‘a’ heard a pin fall, and then when the Rabbit fielded the ball off Gibbons’ jaw and shot it home just in time to catch Hogan by eighteen inches you ought to hear them!

“And you ought to seen them! Look at me! I’m nothing! Called six ambulances! Boys helped me put Gibbons on an automobile and I hustled him down to your house. Chances are he’s telling Mrs. McTish his right name now. Shock, you know, just what he needed.”

“My house?” snarled Larry.

“Certainly. D’you want the police to get him. Soon as he was comfortable I phoned the score over to the Island. Knew there was something wrong and hurried across.”

"You saved me from bein' killed, all right, I'll give that to you," yielded Larry grudgingly.

"Bosh! They were only having a little fun with you. And, any way, what do you care! We won the pennant, didn't we? Think of it, Mac—Champions of the World!

"Another thing," Doctor Gay pulled himself up on tip-toe. "If this shock has made Gibbons normal all you have to do is put a mustache on him, dye that spot on his head, sign him, and you'll have a pitcher who'll win half a dozen more pennants—half a dozen, Mac, or I'll buy you as many suits of clothes!"

Larry listened to the other in pondering silence wrestling gingerly with a loosened tooth. Down the avenue, at right angles, swept a chaotic procession shouting the slogan: "One to nothing," and carrying that legend on hastily improvised banners. Falling in behind the rear guard Larry lifted his head, straightened his shoulders and quickened his pace. A tense, hard gleam shone from his eyes.

"There might be something in that," he agreed

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as they came in sight of the McTish home. "And say, Doc," he added grimly as his right hand gradually tightened into the cohesion of a Zulu War club, "if this shock didn't bring him to, I bet a year's salary I c'n furnish one that will!"



## THE POST POST-SEASON GAME

UNKNOWN to the multitude of American fans there was played, shortly after the post-season in 1909, the most notable game of ball that ever was, or doubtless ever will be, seen. No less remarkable than the game itself was the manner of its planning and the miraculous result. That the newspapers remained entirely ignorant is also some cause for wonderment, although strictest secrecy was imposed upon the participants. Now that the progenitor of this mighty sporting event is *en route* to Egypt, I can see no violation of faith in patching together the narrative whispered to me by several of the big leaguers who figured in it and profited so richly by this post post-season game.

It will be recalled that, following the Detroit-Pittsburg series, a number of famous ball-players were seen in New York for a day or two. Wagner's presence did not surprise the sporting scribes as he was supposed to be looking over the auto-

ALL-STAR NATIONAL LEAGUE CLUB

	G	AB	R	H	SH	SB	PCT.
Evers, 2b., Chi.....	127	465	89	127	13	32	.273
Leach, cf., Pitts.....	151	586	122	152	28	28	.259
Clarke, lf., Pitts.....	152	550	96	159	23	32	.289
Wagner, ss., Pitts.....	138	491	91	169	25	35	.344
Mitchell, rf., Cin.....	143	519	81	163	17	34	.314
Grant, 3b., Phila.....	152	622	76	175	27	28	.281
Chance, 1b., Chi.....	92	323	52	87	14	31	.269
Gibson, c., Pitts.....	150	510	41	135	18	9	.265
Mathewson, p., N. Y.....	37	94	9	25	2	1	.266
Totals .....	1142	4160	657	1192	167	230	.284

ALL-STAR AMERICAN LEAGUE CLUB

	G	AB	R	H	SH	SB	PCT.
Lord, 3b., Bost.....	136	521	87	158	35	42	.305
Chase, 1b., N. Y.....	118	469	60	132	15	26	.281
Cobb, rf., Det.....	156	573	116	218	22	81	.380
Crawford, cf., Det.....	156	587	82	183	23	34	.312
Speaker, lf., Bost.....	143	544	65	165	15	39	.303
Collins, 2b., Phila.....	153	567	104	200	21	64	.353
Bush, ss., Det.....	157	533	113	144	56	52	.270
Carrigan, c., Bost.....	95	281	26	85	13	4	.302
Mullin, p., Det.....	54	126	13	27	1	2	.214
Totals .....	1168	4196	666	1312	201	344	.302

RECORDS OF THE PITCHERS

	G	WON	LOST	PCT.	R	RUNS	BB	HB	SO
						PER G			
Mathewson .....	33	24	6	.800	57	1.73	34	0	144
Mullin .....	37	29	8	.784	95	2.57	79	9	131

UMPIRES

Bob Emslie

Billy Evans

mobile market. "Ty" Cobb explained that it was just as cheap for him to reach Augusta, Ga., via New York and down the coast by boat, as going direct from Detroit, which was plausible. But when Sam Crawford, who lives way out in Wahoo, Neb.; Fred Clarke, who invariably returns as quickly as possible to his farm in Kansas, and Johnny Evers were seen together at the Imperial Hotel, baseball news-mongers pricked up their ears. Were they forming another brotherhood? Was there a "big deal" on? Were these stars of the diamond all going into vaudeville? Sporting columns abounded with speculations, but only for a day, as football and election news were of primary public interest.

Holy bats! Had the real significance of this gathering been known, even the London *Times* could not have kept the story off its front page.

For various reasons I shall not give the right name of the multimillionaire who hired these two picked clubs from the National and American Leagues to play an exhibition game. My particular reason is that his selfishness in permitting only himself and one other person to witness the colossal

struggle would arouse such hatred in the bosom of 'American "fandom" as probably to expatriate him. Think of it—Mathewson, with hitters and fielders like Wagner, Mike Mitchell, Evers and Chance, opposing George Mullin, backed up by "Ty" Cobb, "Tris" Speaker, Crawford and Eddie Collins! And only two "fans" to watch the battle!

Using the terms accurately, you could not call either of these spectators a "fan"; the correct word is "bug," for the baseball "bug" is a statistician, primarily. He follows the "dope" on paper and may never even visit a ball park. As a matter of fact I understand that neither Mr. Howard Merrill (and, by the way, that is near enough to suggest his identity to Yale graduates of twenty years ago), nor his stableman, Patrick McGuire, had seen a game in many seasons. But each kept a minute record of every important ball-player's work and both were prepared to annihilate any novice who could support a statement only by such worthless chatter as: "I tell you so-and-so is the greatest third baseman in the country. I've seen 'em all play and I ought to know!" When a poor soul

mouthed these phrases to either Merrill or McGuire he would be routed by a hail of figures in jig time.

Despite his vast wealth, the millionaire had small opportunity to exhibit his astonishing baseball lore because illness had made him more or less of a recluse. The precise nature of this ailment could not be established, although he had spent fortunes in consulting medical authorities in this country and in Europe. It would seem to have been a species of paralysis, for he had not walked in years. Neurasthenia, with a prefix of polysyllabic adjectives, was the general opinion of these experts, each of whom suggested different treatment.

Of hypersensitive nature, Merrill was a puzzle even to his mates in college. He had few friends and joined no club, but his extreme devotion to baseball caused him to be elected manager of the team in his senior year, a job that he handled with surprising judgment. Until his malady prevented, Merrill had never missed a National League game at the Polo Grounds. He believed as firmly in its superiority over the American League as France did in the all-conquering genius of Napoleon.

Behold, then, this eccentric millionaire baseball "bug" immured through the long, sweet summer months in his study, bending over closely-written charts upon which he labored with the persistence of an astronomer reckoning the course of a new comet. Photographs of baseball heroes, past and present, covered the walls. Long shelves sagged with the weight of batting and fielding averages, compiled for the most part by his own weak but untiring hand. Sometimes his secretary, Hackett, likewise a bachelor, who attended to all details of the immense estate, would gently remonstrate, but without result. Barnes, the establishment's *major domo*, kept his English restraint, but often honest tears would gather in his eyes at the daily scene, which to him and the other devoted servants was genuinely pathetic. Rather than have disturbed his kindly master or cause him anxiety, Barnes would have sacrificed his right arm, and yet, such is the warp of circumstance, it was the loyal Barnes who precipitated unheard of events in the household of Merrill.

With a sigh of relish the millionaire eccentric

leaned back in his invalid chair one afternoon and exclaimed, half soliloquizing: "Well, just as I said. Pittsburg in a gallop, and, by Jove, what a beating she'll give the American League champions! Champions!" He chuckled derisively, and noticing Barnes, who knew as much about the American pastime as a Chinese idol, remarked in his exuberance:

"Wipe 'em off the earth, Barnes—annihilate 'em, Pittsburg will. Sorry for Jennings—always liked him—he was a great shortstop, but he had no business to get mixed up with this American League. It'll kill him in baseball. Pittsburg'll simply eat up Detroit!"

Barnes, standing at respectful attention, agreed readily, and to make it stronger, added: "What I told McGuire, sir, told him only——"

"McGuire? Who's McGuire?" snapped Mr. Merrill, his eye already glinting with light of battle.

"Stableman, sir; 'as charge of the work-'orses. We 'ired 'im a year ago, sir, in old Gordon's place. Lives with 'is wife and six children in Gordon's cottage. Very steady man, sir, but dogged, quite



"I'M PICKING THE TIGERS FOR THEIR CLUB HITTING."



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dogged, Mr. Merrill. 'E 'as the 'arness room covered with figures just like yours, sir. 'E's very dogged, is McGuire. 'E says the—I think 'e calls them the Lions will win, sir."

"Lions?" shrilled Mr. Merrill. "Tigers, you mean, Barnes. Tigers—Detroit! The poor fool——"

"Yes, sir," put in Barnes, hastily, "we told 'im that. But 'e's so dogged, 'e 'as the figures——"

"Figures for what?" demanded the millionaire.

"F-f-for clouting, I think was his word," stammered Barnes, alarmed and annoyed at his master's sudden fury. "Yes, sir, clouting was the word."

Mr. Merrill's laugh was triumphant but threatening. "Batting! What do a few extra hits mean? Pittsburg's got it on 'em in fielding, pitching, and everything else. Tell him so, Barnes. Tell McGuinness, McMahon or whatever his name is. No, send him up. I'll tell him myself. Use the 'phone. Get him here, quick. Confound the ignorance of these silly fans."

From the depths of the stable a groom summoned Patrick McGuire, whose wide Irish face

silently bespoke his astonishment. Cloddishly he approached the great mansion, his big, red hands industriously flicking bits of hay and manure from jumper and overalls. High stepped McGuire over shining floors and costly rugs; with a grip of death he squeezed his old slouch hat as the millionaire turned upon him vindictively:

“Here, you, McGuinness, McFadden (‘McGuire, sir,’ prompted the ever-thoughtful Barnes)—You, McGuire, what d’you mean by telling these people that Detroit’ll beat Pittsburg? Eh, what?”

McGuire, who had been prepared for anything, even sentence of death, gulped a huge inhale. His back straightened, up went his head, and his blue Irish eyes widened boldly. In inimitable brogue he replied, firmly: “Mister Merrill, I’m picking th’ Tigers fer their club hittin’, .268 against .259 fer Pittsburg. If you had the figures, sir——”

“Figures!” whooped the rich man, gesturing about the room. “Haven’t I got ’em? Just finished them to-day! What do I care for your measly nine points difference in batting! Fielding is what counts. Look at that!” And he flung at the stable-

man, neatly written in pen and ink, the National League Club fielding:

CLUB	PO	A	E	PCT
Chicago .....	4207	1951	217	.966
Pittsburg .....	4001	1862	211	.965
Philadelphia .....	4107	2067	231	.964
Brooklyn .....	4114	1937	280	.956
New York .....	4154	2090	300	.954
Cincinnati .....	4232	1981	313	.952
Boston .....	4158	2082	327	.950
St. Louis .....	3991	1930	310	.950

Triple play—Philadelphia, 1. Double plays—Cincinnati, 118; Boston, 106; Pittsburg, 102; St. Louis, 101; Brooklyn, 97; Philadelphia, 95; New York, 91; Chicago, 91.

“And now that,” snarled the millionaire through his teeth, flashing the other league’s averages.  
“Where’s Detroit?”

CLUB	PO	A	E	PCT
Athletics .....	4122	1855	239	.962
Chicago .....	4199	2354	259	.962
Detroit .....	4254	2235	277	.959
Cleveland .....	3995	2028	264	.958
Washington .....	4094	2073	280	.957
St. Louis .....	4071	1979	274	.957
Boston .....	4033	2037	288	.955
New York .....	4037	2009	328	.949

Triple plays—Athletics, 1; Chicago, 1; Cleveland, 1. Double plays—Boston, 108; Cleveland, 108; Chicago, 106; St. Louis, 102; Athletics, 98; Washington, 98; New York, 93; Detroit, 89.

Doggedly, for he was, as Barnes said, a dogged man, McGuire read them through. His jeer was blasphemy to Barnes. "Six measly points! Oho! An' what's fielding count anyway! Get your men on bases an' hit 'em around. That's the club fer me. An' besides," the plebeian "bug" leered wisely, "if you add up them figures, I'm thinkin' th' American League has the best of it. Have you——"

"I knew it; I knew it," shouted Mr. Merrill, pounding the table with surpassing energy, "you're an out-and-out American Leaguer. You've shown your true colors."

"An' what if I am," retorted McGuire, just as vociferously. "Every man is entitled to his own opinion, Mister Merrill. What I say is, figure it up! It's only fair!" He gestured with clenched fist, appealing to Hackett and Barnes. The one, standing behind the millionaire's chair, waved madly toward the door, but McGuire ignored the hint. Barnes' hands were clasped in suppliance. Outside, one might have heard the heavy breathing of household servants.

Nettled by the only opposition he had ever en-

countered, for his friends invariably humored him, the rich man testily began to add up his averages. With a stub pencil and a piece of brown wrapping paper that he fished from his pocket, McGuire did likewise. He was only half through when Mr. Merrill announced: "General fielding average, National League, .957; they accepted 957 chances out of every 1,000 offered."

Presently the Irishman's big red hand covered his mouth, his eyes shone roguishly. "Be jabers," he chuckled, triumphantly, "e-e-e, if I ain't got y' beat may I never lift a curry comb a'gain—the American's is .964!" With that he leaned back and laughed until the Adam's apple on his unshaven neck seemed likely to escape its moorings.

The millionaire accepted this in a silent frenzy. So pale were his cheeks, so wabbly his hands that Hackett and Barnes chorused a remonstrance against the impertinent stableman. But Mr. Merrill rebuked them. He was game. He knew a "bug" when he saw one and went the limit, so far as his health permitted.

Midnight had struck when McGuire was, almost

forcibly, removed from the room. But he walked heavily on the velvet carpet now, slapping his legs and crowing. In championing the American League he had won nearly every point, base-running, extra bases, fielding and hitting.

But if McGuire thought the victory won he was sadly mistaken. Hardly had he reached the stable next morning when an order came:

"Tell McGuire to bring up his pitching records."

Back and forward went the stableman, always "dogged." It was common news that Mr. Merrill bordered on a complete breakdown. Hackett, the secretary, sent for a nerve specialist from Boston. "If our patient keeps this up one week I won't give a cent for his life," was his prophecy. "He will die of exhaustion."

Hackett, Barnes, Mrs. McGuire, and her brother, Mike Hennessy, who came all the way from Riverhead, cajoled and threatened McGuire. "You are killing Mr. Merrill!" exclaimed Hackett. "He hasn't slept one night. I'll have you discharged!"

"Discharge ahead," roared the stableman, throw-

ing down a pitchfork full of hay. "Who started it! I'll let no wan tell me Camnitz is a better pitcher than George Mullin! Look at the figures!"

On the evening of the day that Pittsburg finally beat Detroit for the world's championship, Patrick McGuire was carried from his cottage door amidst cheers, howls and cat-calls.

"Face it out," cried Mr. Merrill. "Take your medicine like a man, McGuire." The chart room had been converted into a buffet. "Drink this Burgundy of '66 to the National League. I told you what would happen, old fellow, but don't feel bad. You've got something to learn——"

"Feel bad!" rapped out McGuire. "Because a kid pitcher had luck in a couple games? What's that? Didn't I give you th' figures t' show the American League was faster, and stronger, and——"

"Now, McGuire," with difficulty Mr. Merrill, strengthened by unusual libation and joy of victory, held his temper, "don't be an ass. I have credited you for considerable knowledge of the game. Evidently you have not figured up that



'kid pitcher,' 'Babe' Adams. He was the best in the National League. Only 1.53 runs were scored on him per game——"

"And he only pitched fifteen games!" jeered McGuire. "You must think he's better than Mathewson!"

"No," pronounced Mr. Merrill with the same ominous restraint. "Mathewson is better; he——"

"And so is Mullin," interpolated McGuire rudely.

"Mullin!" squealed the invalid. "He's a dead one!"

In a trice the evening's festivities were halted. If looks could have killed, McGuire would now be in the Potter's Field. But doggedly he argued—pitchers, shortstops, catchers, and second basemen. When he refused to see the significance in Pittsburgh and Chicago beating their American League rivals, Mr. Merrill's nervous tension reached a terrible climax.

"Get out! Throw him out! Evict him! Hackett, Barnes, Blodgett—put this man off my property! I won't stand such ignorance! Evict him, wife, children and all! Confound the fool!"

Ejected more suddenly than he arrived, McGuire still had breath to shout back: "The Red Sox beat the Giants."

But at his cottage, real tragedy greeted him. Mrs. McGuire, holding her youngest to her bosom, wailed piercingly: "It's me and six children without a home! In hiven's name why did I ever meet such a fool. O wurra, wurra! Sure an' you've gone crazy entirely."

Lamenting and weeping she began to get together their humble household effects.

"He's crazy himself," protested McGuire, in sullen subjection, "tellin' me Devlin's got it over Harry Lord."

"Curses on Lord and Divlin. Curses on them all——"

Her wailings were cut short by the appearance of Secretary Hackett, who shoved his way through the crowd of sympathizing tenants. "McGuire, Mr. Merrill wants to see you again. I believe he has gone mad, and I'm telling you, my man, that if anything happens through your infernal obstinacy, I'll have you tried for homicide."

"I have my figures," McGuire kept repeating, once more travelling the familiar route. "He started it."

A strange quiet pervaded the millionaire's sanctum, where Barnes remained in lone attendance. A desperate calm was on the millionaire's face.

"McGuire," he said, "pick any nine men from the American League and I'll bet you \$500,000 that Mathewson, with eight others from the National League, will beat them!"

For a moment McGuire glanced at Barnes and Hackett. Perhaps the millionaire had gone mad. The others were evidently sure of it. But even then the stableman remained "dogged."

"That's easy enough," he fleered, "when you know I haven't got half a million t' bet!"

Mr. Merrill's hands trembled pitifully, his lips twitched, and you knew he was making supreme effort to speak in even tones. "Quite right, McGuire. Understand that I am betting my money against your situation. Immediately after losing you must move not only off my place but off Long Island.

I have tried to treat you fairly, given you every chance—well, do you take the bet?”

“I do, sir!”

“Hackett!” Mr. Merrill summoned with spasmodic gesture. “Take his team, here’s mine, and start to-night. Get them, no matter what it costs. Telegraph me when arrangements are completed. And you, McGuire, lay off our polo field for a diamond, if you know enough——”

“That I do, sir.”

“Don’t let me see your face again until the game. And now,” overcome by uncommon exertion the invalid crumpled in his chair, “leave me, leave me!”

During the next couple days Mr. Merrill’s stableman was the busiest person on the estate. Mrs. McGuire and the six little McGuires watched him with a sort of fascinated horror as he marked out the baselines with whitewash. Chuckling to himself the American League championer soliloquized: “Ty Cobb, may the Saints bless him, will steal home from here,” reverently tying down third base. “Speaker, me boy, don’t let anything get by you!” The stableman was heroically grubbing in left field.

When, some days later, the teams arrived in motor-cars, umpires Bob Emslie and Billy Evans bringing up the rear, McGuire had contrived a splendid baseball field. The big leaguers, togged out in their various uniforms, went over it carefully, and had small complaint.

"Both these guys are 'bug-house,'" said Fred Clarke to "Husk" Chance.

"No doubt about that," grinned the Cubs' manager, "but we want to get the big end of the purse just the same. I've seen the color of his money already, and it won't fade. What's the split?"

"Sixty thousand to the winner, and forty thousand to the loser," put in Mike Mitchell.

"Mathewson ought to beat 'em," observed Wagner, joining the group. "I want to get a racing-car, and that'll just about give me enough."

As he spoke the gate opened and Barnes wheeled in his master who took position not far from the Nationals' bench. Through the opening door one caught a glimpse of the Merrill tenantry, massed outside, Mrs. McGuire and her brood of six in the center. McGuire came in with great dignity, wear-

ing his Sunday clothes, an old-fashioned swallow-tail coat, high-water trousers and a Castle Garden "dicer." He walked impressively to the far end of the stand, just behind the American bench. Barnes retired reluctantly and closed the gate.

Whatever amusement the ball players may have found in this strange exhibition quickly fled when they noticed their spectators' terrible earnestness. Besides was there not an extra twenty thousand dollars to be divided among the nine winners, and no professional ball-tosser will pass up a couple of thousand "iron men" except under bitter compulsion. So it was that Mathewson, when the Nationals won the toss, put everything he had on his delivery and the Americans in three innings did not get a man past second base.

Mullin worked just as hard, but the pitching percentage began to show in the fourth, Leach leading off with a single and taking second on Clarke's sacrifice. When Wagner came up, Patrick McGuire pleaded with Mullin to "walk him." He was answered by taunts from the millionaire. So snappy and brilliant had been the game that there was no

cessation in the shrill cries of the invalid and the raucous yells of the stableman. "Walk him!" jeered Mr. Merrill, "and Mitchell'll put it over the fence."

"Walk 'em both, George," ordered McGuire, his eyes darting fire at his employer. "Take a chance on Grant. He's easy."

"Listen to the poor fool," screamed Merrill to the players. "He don't know that Eddie Grant made 175 hits this year, more than anyone in the National League."

Grant's retreating chin almost disappeared as he grinned at this recognition.

While they were arguing, Mullin sent in a high, straight one, figuring that the Dutchman could do no more than knock this down in the diamond. Wagner did so, but it went a mile a minute and got away from Bush for a single, Leach taking third.

One out, a man on first and third, with Mike Mitchell up! It was a critical moment. From right field Cobb coached Mullin, bidding him to walk this slugger. Carrigan also thought this wise. But Mullin noticed Leach and Mitchell exchanging

signals and it suddenly came to him that they were going to try the "squeeze." Chase, with his sixth sense, got the same notion. He tipped Mullin to keep the ball on the outside corner. Mitchell, being a right-hand hitter, would be pretty sure to rap between second and first, whether he swung or bunted. Artfully, Chase crept up the line toward the plate.

Sure enough! As Mullin began to wind up, Leach got a start and came from third like a jack-rabbit. Mitchell made a perfect bunt, but Chase swooped it up ten feet from home base, touched Mitchell, and not trusting a toss to Carrigan, dived forward just in time to get Leach, who, not expecting any such phenomenal play, came in standing straight up.

For a moment the arena was completely silent and then a crash of benches in the American League bleachers signified Patrick McGuire's delight. Extricating himself he bayed at the millionaire: "Not a man in y'r league could 'a' done it! 'Twas never done on earth before."

"Oh, yes, it was," laughed Chase. "I pulled it off on the coast once."



"A freak play," cried the millionaire, recovering his voice. With that he engaged McGuire in hot-shot dispute and the game continued.

In the sixth the Americans had a fine chance to score but were killed off by the headwork of Wagner. Carrigan singled and took second on Mullin's sacrifice. Little Bush poked a low drive in short center which Leach played safe instead of trying to get it on the line. Patrick McGuire was in ecstasies.

"Circus Solly Hofman would 'a' had it!" he railed at the millionaire. "Solly'd got it. Why didn't you have him on your club?"

Above the voice of coaches could be heard the invalid's shrill retort. "You bonehead, Leach scored 122 runs, led the National League. Hofman only scored sixty-one. Mind your own business!"

"If Hofman had had Wagner to follow him he'd made just as many," shouted the dogged McGuire.

The ball-players were giving no heed to the two "bugs" now. They were too much absorbed in the game and the sixty-thousand dollar share. When Lord had two strikes and two balls, it was pretty

certain that Bush, with a record of fifty-two stolen bases, would try to pilfer second, and Wagner halted Mathewson while he conferred a moment with Evers. "I'll sign Gibson," said the Dutchman, "for a pitch out. He'll peg straight for the bag. If I see that there's a chance to get Carrigan off third I'll take the throw. If not you take it and nail Bush."

Mathewson and Grant were tipped off to the strategy by signal, and "Big Six" made great pretense at putting a third strike over on Lord. His wind-up was longer than usual in order to give Bush a start from first. But when he let it go it was with all his speed, high and a foot wide, so that Gibson would lose no time in firing to second. True as a machine the ball came, Wagner and Evers both darting toward the bag. But out of his eye-corner the crafty Dutchman was watching Carrigan on third, and when he saw him carelessly cavorting, he reached out his huge mit, speared Gibson's throw, and quick as might be whipped to Grant. Carrigan was taken completely unawares, for he was not thinking of a steal home, and was tagged, flounder-

ing to recover third base. With no one to bother him on third, Matty took his time, and finally out-guessed Lord on strikes.

In the Nationals' sixth, Clarke grounded out, Lord to Chase. Wagner and Mitchell walked. Grant was safe on Collins' low throw. Chance lined to Lord and Gibson died, Collins to Chase.

There was something appealing in the poor millionaire's attempt to stand up when the National League fellows came to bat in the seventh. After the ancient custom, he thought he should advertise his loyalty by getting on to his feet. He wasn't able. McGuire had rooted himself hoarse while his men were at bat in the same inning, for the American Leaguers had an excellent chance to score. Chase beat a bunt and Cobb committed suicide. "Wahoo" Crawford was the boy on the burning deck (waited for a pass). Speaker, having tasted Matty's "fade-away" in the Red-Sox-Giants series, was wise and smote a Texas Leaguer over Wagner's dial. With Collins, a savage hitter, on deck, Gibson began to think. "Chase is the best hit-and-run man in fast company," said he to him-

self. "He's fast at any stage of the game. Is there any dodge that will flag him?"

Bases were filled, Chase on third, Crawford on second, Speaker on first. And Eddie Collins, who batted .353, was up. You can make a little wager that Gibson was thinking.

Well, what do you suppose he did?

He tipped off Fred Clarke, who said a word to Eddie Grant. I will give you the inside dope. Said Gibson to the club with his sign lingo: "I'll throw to Grant and he'll throw to Evers." Are you wise? No?

Here's what actually happened. Chase is always a long-shot playing off base. But when Gibson whipped to Grant, Grant paid no attention to Chase—did not try to tag him. Instantly he shot the ball to Evers, and what do you think? Sam Crawford was killed! Watching Chase he forgot to look out for himself.

"The old '66,'" whooped McGuire. "Mike Kelly used to work it!"

Collins raised to Mitchell. The side was retired. Mr. Merrill, as has been stated, tried to sit up in

his chair when the Nationals came to bat in the seventh. Mathewson appeared to be affected by the invalid's enthusiasm and touched by his infirmity.

"Put it over," he yelled at Mullin. "You're afraid."

The Tiger twister answered in kind and shot one of his fast curves. Matty slammed it for three bases. As he turned third bag, "Tris" Speaker was just relaying to Crawford, and Matty determined to make it a homer. His judgment was wrong by a second, for Crawford hurled direct to home plate, a low throw on the bounce, to Carrigan, who took great chances in blocking Matty's feet-first slide.

Evers did the same thing—a triple, and was cut off at the plate, stretching. Leach singled to right. Clarke beat a bunt. So did Wagner. Five hits, bases full, no runs, two out!

Mullin was apparently gone to pieces. Mitchell slapped him for a single, but the ball bounced against Clarke's leg, as the Pirate captain raced to third, and being hit by a batted ball he was out, retiring the side. Six hits and no score!

Eighth inning: Carrigan perished, Bush to Chase. Collins swiped a short drive from Mullin. Bush cloud-scraped to Mitchell.

No runs—no hits—none left.

Mullin tightened up now and the Nationals hardly threatened in their half of the eighth. Grant's hot bounce was handled by Collins. Chance floated to Crawford. Gibson singled, but Matty quickly forced him at second, Collins to Bush.

The stress of excitement was telling on everybody. Wagner gazed hard at the invalid.

"Looks like he'd croak before this is over," he confided to Clarke. The stableman had almost lost his voice. The veins stood out on his forehead. He had nothing left of his hat but the rim. "For the love of heaven," he implored Cobb, "beat 'em this inning." The American Leaguers were howling at Harry Lord to "get on" and the nervy youngster clamped his jaws determinedly, as he faced the king of twirlers. Lord took the limit and chopped a clean single in short left. Mullin wanted Chase to sacrifice but Hal declined the suggestion. Seeing that Grant was playing in close Chase rapped hard

at an inside fast one and pulled it at Grant so sharply that Eddie juggled long enough for Hal to reach first, Lord taking second.

As one, the players of both sides recognized the situation as exactly similar to the one in which Mordecai Brown outguessed Ty Cobb in that famous world's series game of 1908 with the exception that here there had been no scoring. In the Chicago-Detroit contest Brown made Cobb bunt toward third and telling Steinfeldt to stick on his base Brown fielded the bunt, cutting off the runner going from second to third. The National infielders stared at Matty and knew by his expression that he remembered the strategy. Would he also employ it? Chance was almost as nervous as Mr. Merrill, but he felt it useless to advise so clever a general as Mathewson. If he could not outguess Cobb, no one could. By the first ball, pitched high and fast close to Cobb, it was evident that "Big Six" believed the Tiger slugger did not intend to be caught again. He was, therefore, surprised when Cobb stepped back and attempted to bunt, fouling it off. Grant and Chance queried Matty

silently. But he had shook his head as though to say: "Hold your positions. I think Cobb is only bluffing at the bunt." When Ty again tried to dump a fast one inside, his team mates shouted wildly and strove to get his attention.

"Look out, Matty," cried Chance, "look out for Lord!"

Bush was doing his best to hold the speedy Boston runner at second. Grant was uncertain whether to stick to his bag or play in for a bunt. When Matty had Cobb with three balls and two strikes "in the hole," as the saying goes, Chance ran over to the pitcher's box: "It's a cinch he's going to bunt and if we're to get Lord, you'd better keep it low over the outside corner and field it yourself. It's the only chance. He's *got* to dump it toward third an' you c'n make the play easy."

Mathewson was still reluctant. He did not trust the wily Cobb. But Chance was so insistent, and the fact that Cobb had twice essayed the bunt—maybe Cobb was figuring that he, Mathewson, did not expect him to do the same as in Chicago, and thus



hoped to outguess him. Matty concluded that this was so, and he signed Grant to stick on third. But this would be no ordinary curve. He would give Cobb one of his best "faders," breaking down and away from the batter. Maybe he could strike him out.

Cobb watched the brief wind-up and his shrewd eyes, never leaving the ball, glinted triumphantly as he saw it approach waist-high and fading. Quicker than thought he stepped forward and with a short, hard swing pushed a clean drive ten feet from Grant's reach out into left field. Clarke started the moment it left the bat, but a nasty bounce confused him, and Lord, rounding third, tore across the plate. Mathewson acknowledged the strategy with a sarcastic grin directed at Chance, which did not escape Cobb's notice. Crawford fouled out to Gibson and on Speaker's drive to Mitchell, Chase was doubled at third, a wonderful throw.

The Nationals' chagrin lasted only a moment. Grant and Mathewson went to the coaching lines. Encouraged by their oratory, Evers singled through the pitcher's box. Bush made a mess of Leach's

grounder and Clarke outsprinted a bunt to Lord, filling the bases. The mighty Wagner pawed the earth, spat on his hands, and roared defiance at Mullin. Like Cæsar drawing his robe lest he see his assassins stab him, Patrick McGuire's big hands covered his face as he rocked back and forward. Mr. Merrill was crying and laughing: "It's all over! Wagner'll kill it!" Infielders and outfielders were begging Mullin to "steady up!"

Wagner, never a good waiter, refused to "take" the first one though high and wide. Again he swung and missed a curve. Mixing them up, Mullin sent in another high fast one away from the plate, but Wagner, aroused to fury, swung with all his power. Crash! A Gargantuan wallop, going with such speed that Mullin just managed to get part of his gloved hand to his forehead when the drive hit him squarely. Chase, expecting a play to be made at the plate on Evers, was way in so that he could back up Carrigan. As the ball bounced from Mullin's head he dashed toward the box, grabbed the ball before it struck ground, whipped to Lord at third and Lord whipped to Collins, thus

completing a triple play on Wagner, Evers and Leach in less time than it can be told.

The grotesque head of McGuire, wearing a frayed hat rim, was the first thing that Mullin saw on regaining consciousness.

"W-what's the matter?" muttered the bewildered pitcher.

"Ye win, Garge, ye win!" blared McGuire. "The ball bounced to your farhead and Chase made a triple play! 'Twas niver done but wance before. Buffalo and Boston in 1884, Rowe ketchin' and Galvin pitchin'. I seen it—what!"

Breaking away suddenly, McGuire reached the home plate where Umpires Emslie and Evans held their ground against the jostling Nationals.

The stableman's arguments were drowned in a roar of personal abuse which was suppressed by Fred Clarke and Frank Chance. "That play's legitimate," said Clarke. "And I remember about it being made in Boston. Come on, let him alone!"

"If you wasn't crazy, I'd knock your block off!" Wagner, bare-headed, red-faced, raised both gorilla

arms over a slight but animated figure that danced around him shouting, "Why didn't you wait! You struck at two wide ones! He'd 'a' walked you! We'd 'a' tied th' score!"

At sound of this voice McGuire tore the big Dutchman aside. "He's walking—*walking*—first time in ten years—Mr. Merrill's walking!"

The millionaire, in his passion of excitement, had indeed leaped from his chair. Only now did he seem to realize it. Quizzically he glanced from one to another as he looked himself up and down.

"You had no kick coming, Mr. Merrill," said Mathewson, "we out-hit, out-pitched, and out-fielded them."

"Why, yes," the rich "bug" spoke meekly. He was more interested in punching himself and springing his joints. "My score shows that. But I don't—er, quite—the figures seem to—— How do you account for it?"

"Luck!" chorused a dozen voices. "The break, man; figures ain't everything! Luck counts in baseball."

With a bewildered smile the millionaire looked

about for his stableman. He was doing a jig with three little McGuires clinging to his shoulders.

"McGuire," he called out, "you're rich forever—good luck to you."

Then turning, and shaking hands with the players, he said: "Boys, that finishes me as a baseball bug. Hackett, burn up all that stuff in my rooms." With red blood jumping through his veins, his heart pumping and his spleen active, he turned and ran for the gate like a school boy at recess.

THE SCORE

NATIONALS						AMERICANS					
	ab	h	po	a	e		ab	h	po	a	e
Evers, 2b. ....	5	2	3	1	0	Lord, 3b. ....	4	2	2	2	0
Leach, cf. ....	5	2	1	0	0	Chase, 1b. ....	4	1	11	3	0
Clarke, lf. ....	4	2	1	0	0	Cobb, rf. ....	3	1	1	0	0
Wagner, ss. ...	4	2	1	5	0	Crawford, cf. .	3	1	3	2	0
Mitchell, rf. .	3	1	4	1	0	Speaker, lf. ...	4	1	1	2	0
Grant, 3b. ....	4	1	2	0	1	Collins, 3b. ...	3	1	1	3	1
Chance, 1b. ...	4	1	8	0	0	Carrigan, c. ...	3	1	5	0	0
Gibson, c. ....	3	1	6	5	0	Mullin, p. ....	2	0	0	0	1
Mathewson, p. .	4	1	1	3	0	Bush, ss. ....	3	1	2	3	1
Totals .....	36	13	27	15	1	Totals .....	29	9	26	15	3

\* Clarke out for interfering with batted ball in the ninth.

Nationals .....0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0—0  
 Americans .....0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1—1

Runs—For Americans, Lord. Three-base hits—Mathewson, Evers. Sacrifice hits—Clarke, Cobb, Mullin. Left on bases

*The Post Post-Season Game* 811

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—Nationals, 13; Americans, 4. Triple plays—Chase, Lord, Collins. Double plays—Chase (unassisted); Mathewson, Chance; Mitchell, Grant. First base on balls—Off Mathewson, 1; off Mullin, 3. Struck out—By Mathewson, 5; by Mullin, 3. Time of game, 1h. 46m. Umpires—Emslie and Evans. Attendance—2.



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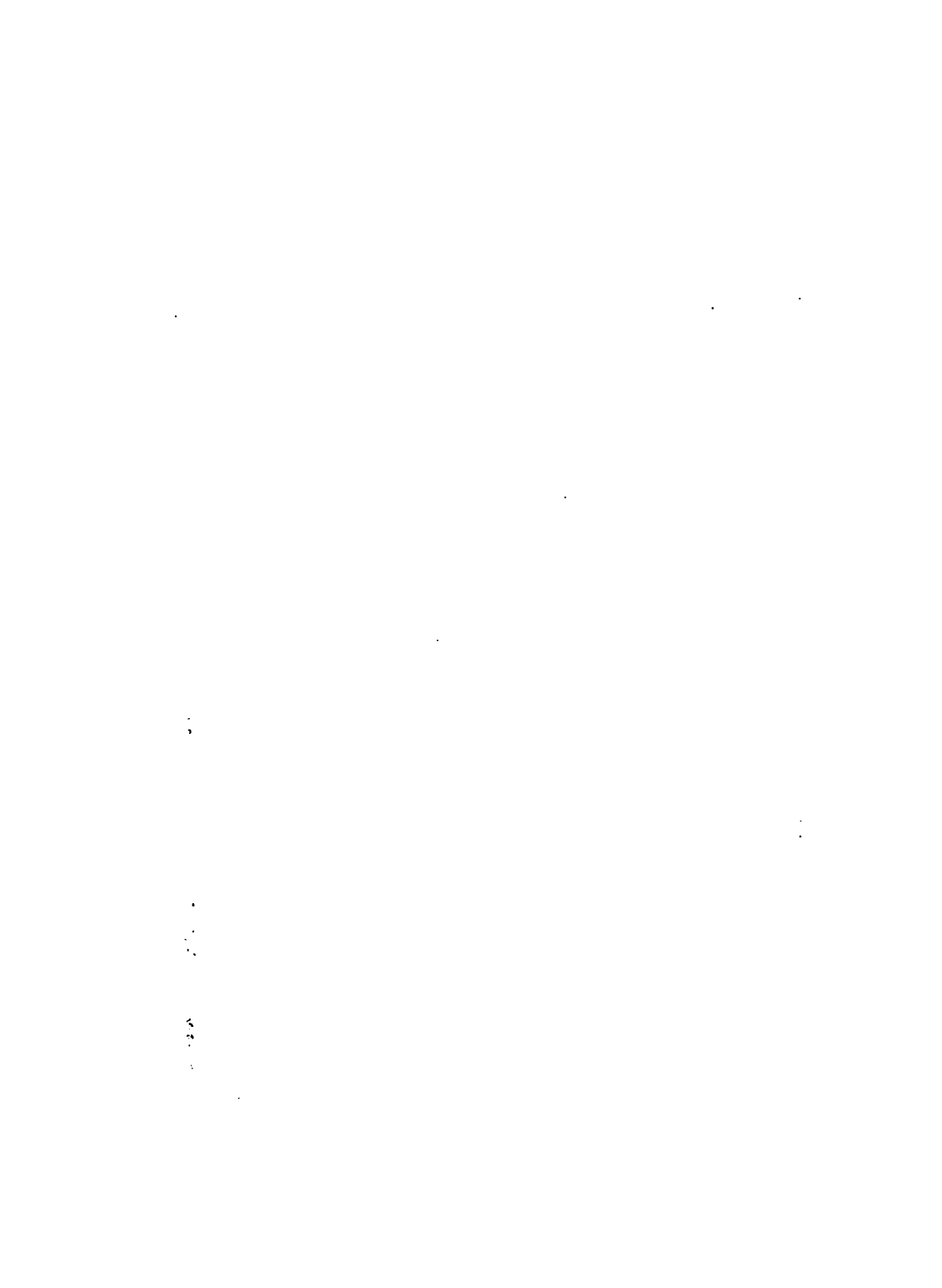
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